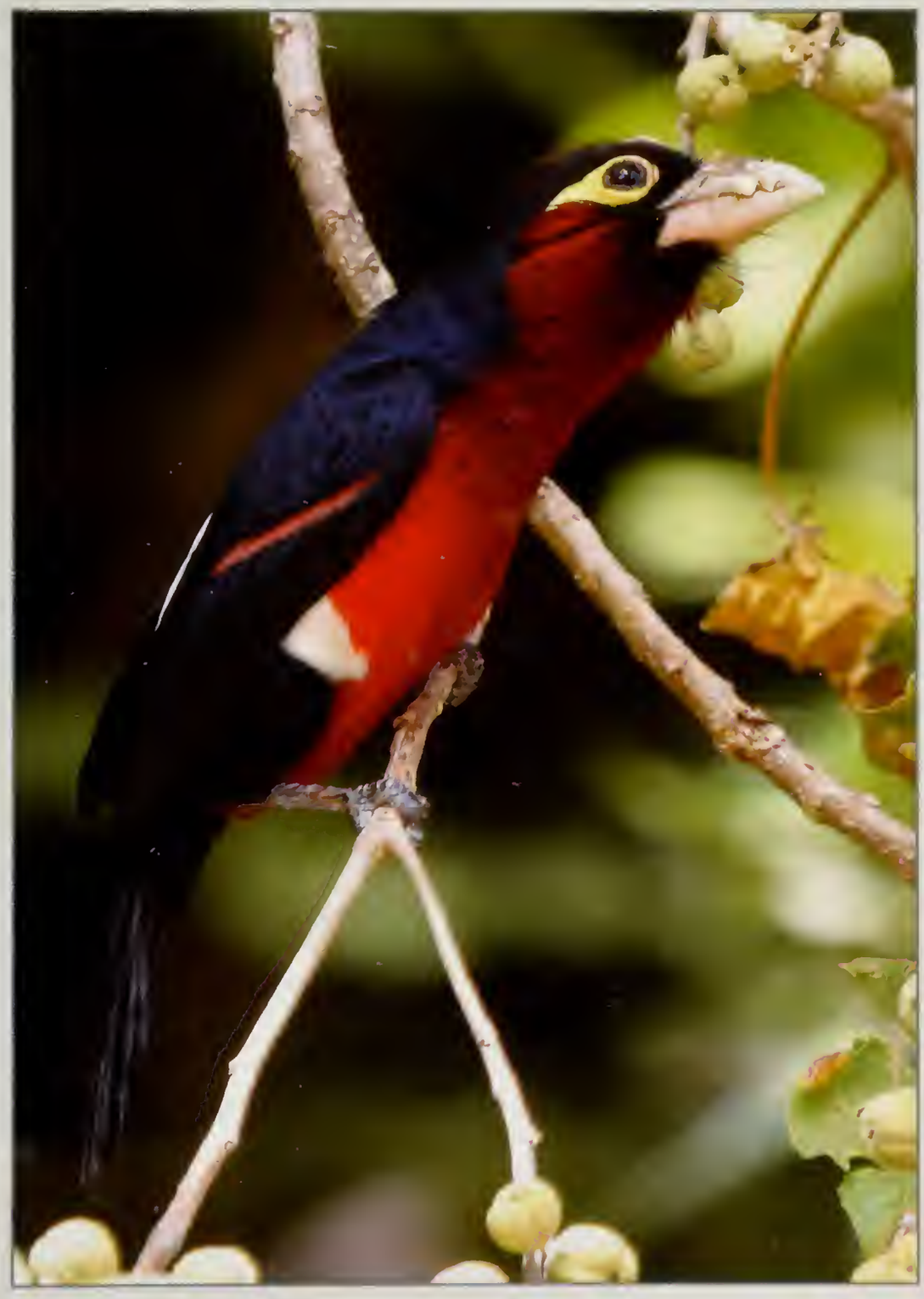
African Bird Club

Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 17 No 1 March 2010



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African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Membership

Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£18	Rest of the World: UK£20
Family	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£10	Rest of the World: UK£12
Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

ABC Website

http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Photographers and artists

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, pleonard@care4free.net

Contact ABC

African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA. E-mail: • info@africanbirdclub.org • website: http://www.africanbirdclub.org
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ABC particularly wishes to thank its Corporate Sponsors for their invaluable financial support in 2010: Abacus African Safaris, Ashanti African Tours, Access Africa Safaris, Aim 4 Africa, Ben's Ecological Safaris, Bird Feeding Station, Birdfinders, Birding Africa, Birding and beyond Safaris, Birding Ecotours, Birdquest, Birdwatching Breaks, Calluna Books, Crystal Safaris, Field Guides, Greentours, Hyde-Lascelles, Lake Kitandara Tours and Travel, Lawson's Birdwatching Tours, Limosa Holidays, MKA Ecology, Naturetrek, Ornitholidays, Rockjumper, Sarus Bird Tours, Sunbird, Turaco Tours, Turtle Bay Beach Club, WildSounds, Wildwings, and Zeiss.

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor (editor@africanbirdclub.org).

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Jason Anderson, Rubén Barone, P. Bentley, Kris Blachowiak, Nik Borrow, R. S. Boyes, Artur Bujanowicz, John Caddick, Simon Colenutt, Toby Collett, John Cooper, Daniel Cornelis, Greg Davies, Paul Donald, Jonathan C. Eames, Augusto Faustino, S. Ferwerda, Daphne Gemmill, Bernard Hanus, Jens Hering, A. P. Leventis, Tess Macdonald, Ian Merrill, Johannes & Sharon Merz, Michael Mills, Phoebe Munyoro, Georges Olioso, Fábio Olmos, Phil Palmer, Guillaume Passavy, Bruno Portier, Dave Richards, Adam Riley, Steve Rooke, Peter Ryan, Eugenie Skelton, Axel Smets, Claire Spottiswoode, Geoff & Hilary Welch, Manfred Wichmann, Alan Williams, Malcolm Wilson.

Front cover plate

Double-toothed Barbet / Barbican bidenté *Lybius bidentatus* by Ian Fulton

Features

Club News

2009 British Birdwatching Fair

The worldwide economic difficulties led to much concern about the impact this might have on the premier UK birdwatching event, the annual Birdwatching Fair held at Rutland in central England. Everyone was pleased to see a favourable weather forecast, and this brought record attendances over the three days of the fair in August 2009. Business seemed as brisk as usual. The Club had its usual presence, a stand in Marquee 4, which was manned by Council members and other volunteers. Once again, thanks go to those who give freely of their time to ensure that members can meet those involved in running the Club. In particular, Geoff & Bev Randall designed and set up the stand, and ensured that the sales section was as successful as usual. It is also an opportunity to promote the pleasures of birding in Africa and to persuade interested non-members to join the Club. One member of Council, Nigel Redman, had a particularly busy time with his talk on 'Birds of the Horn of Africa', as our representative on the 'Bird Brain of Britain' quiz team and helping out on the stand. The fair also permits the Club to meet some of our Corporate Sponsors, of which there are currently over 30. Their invaluable financial support helps maintain the standard of the Bulletin. The full list of Corporate Sponsors appears on the inside front cover.

ABC AGM Minutes and Accounts

In future, to save space it has been decided not to publish the summary accounts and AGM minutes in the Club News section of the Bulletin. Copies of these will be posted on the website and any member can obtain a copy from the Secretary by e-mailing secretary@africanbirdclub.org or by writing to the Club's postal address.

Overseas payment schemes

The Club has set up several local payment schemes whereby membership payments can be made in local currency via a partner organisation. The membership benefits are the same as for a member paying in sterling. The income received is, however, retained in the country where the scheme is run and is used to fund agreed local conservation projects. Local payment schemes are currently active in Kenya, Uganda, Madagascar, South Africa and Zimbabwe. If you are a resident of any of these countries and wish to pay your membership fees in your local currency (at a significant discount compared to the prevailing sterling fees) please contact Alan Williams, Membership Secretary via membership@africanbirdclub.org.

Figure 1. Nigel Redman signing a copy of *Birds of the Horn of Africa* at the Rutland Birdfair, August 2009 (Alan Williams)

Nigel Redman signant un exemplaire de *Birds of the Horn of Africa* au Birdfair de Rutland, août 2009 (Alan Williams)

Figure 2. A visitor to the ABC stand being persuaded to 'Find the Plover' by Chris Bowden, Rutland Birdfair, August 2009 (Alan Williams)

Un visiteur au stand du ABC en train de se laisser persuader de «Trouver le Pluvian d'Égypte» par Chris Bowden, Birdfair de Rutland, août 2009 (Alan Williams)

Martin Woodcock's *Safari Sketchbook*

The last few years have seen the publication of many fine new or revised field guides to various African countries, but a completely different look at African birds is now in the offing. Six years after the last volume of *The Birds of Africa* appeared, Martin Woodcock, the principal illustrator of those volumes, has gone back to the sketchbooks and journals made during his field trips for that work and selected the material for a new book, *Safari Sketchbook—A Bird Painter's African Odyssey*, to be published in spring 2010.

While many of the African trips involved fairly intensive birding, others allowed time for much drawing in the field. Sketches in pencil and watercolour, and some in oil, show a wide variety of birds. Some trips were focused on netting forest birds, whilst others were more general, so that the work ranges from impressions of birds as you see them in the field to more detailed portraits, studies of birds in the hand, and sketches of landscapes and habitats. Much of this work resulted from some lengthy visits to East Africa, especially Tanzania and Kenya, but studies from Ethiopia, Uganda and Cameroon are also included.

Nearly 200 pages from the sketchbooks are complemented by a lively text, in which anecdotes,

Figure 3. Kenneth Gbenga, ABC's representative in Sierra Leone and Rockjumper's ground agent receiving a copy of *Birds of Western Africa* donated by ABC and presented by John Caddick (John Caddick)

Kenneth Gbenga, représentant du ABC en Sierra Leone et agent de Rockjumper, recevant un exemplaire de *Birds of Western Africa* offert par le ABC et remis par John Caddick (John Caddick)

'incidents of the route', a little poetry and some history enhance the underlying ornithology. All this will bring back vivid memories for anyone who has birded in Africa.

For further details and an order form, see Martin's website (martinwoodcock.co.uk) or write to The Esker Press, Furlongs, Long Lane, Wiveton, Norfolk NR25 7DD, UK. Sales to ABC members, if they mention this when ordering, will benefit the Club's Conservation Fund.

Sales Officer vacancy

Geoff & Bev Randall are standing down from their roles as Secretary and Sales Officer respectively. Although the post of Secretary is likely to be filled at the 2010 AGM, that of Sales Officer remains vacant at present. Anyone interested who can spare time for this important post should contact Chairman Keith Betton (chairman@africanbirdclub.org). Council would like to thank Geoff and Bev for all their work on behalf of the Club over many years.

Back issues

Newly joining members are offered a set of back bulletins at a discount. However, Vol. 2(1), Vol. 3(1–2), Vol. 5(1) and Vol. 6(1) are no longer available and the photocopies we provide are an inferior substitute. If you have copies of these issues you no longer wish to keep, we would be grateful if you could return them to the Club at the usual address: African Bird Club, *c/o* Birdlife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

ABC Conservation Tour to Sierra Leone, 9–23 December 2009

The ABC / Rockjumper conservation tour to Sierra Leone in December 2009 was a great success. Five of the eight participants travelled direct from London Heathrow to Freetown, the country's capital, on 9 December, where we were met by Kenneth Gbenga, our local ground agent and ABC's representative in Sierra Leone. From there we transferred to our hotel overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. David Hoddinott, the Rockjumper tour leader, had been travelling in Ghana and flight delays meant he was unable to arrive until the evening of 10th, whilst the other three participants, from South Africa, only joined the group in the afternoon of the 11th due to a flight cancellation.

Birding in the heavily populated Freetown and Western Peninsula areas was remarkably productive. Kenneth took us east of the city for some roadside and coastal birding, whilst David took the same direction next day to the Guma Valley Forest Reserve, which is owned by the local water company, and on the 12th to Freetown's golf course and the Regent Forest Reserve. Highlights of these days included a single White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*, four Yellow-casqued Hornbills *Ceratogymna elata*, an obliging Little Green Woodpecker *Campethera maculosa* and a stunning male Crimson Seedcracker *Pyrenestes sanguineus*. In addition, we found time to visit the first of two White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* roosts only an hour's drive from our hotel on poor roads. After a silent and uncomfortable wait of an hour on stony ground, we had good views of a Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus* before the main event of at least three picathartes showing well.

Figure 4. Egyptian Plover / Pluvian fluviatile *Pluvianus aegyptius*, Moa River, Tiwai Island, Sierra Leone, December 2009 (John Caddick)

Figure 5. Forbes's Plover / Gravelot de Forbes *Charadrius forbesi*, Kenema rice fields, Sierra Leone, December 2009 (John Caddick)

The following two days we birded the pristine forest of Tiwai Island on the Moa River, situated at the western edge of Gola West Forest Reserve, and took an evening boat trip around the island. Here we enjoyed a very obliging Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*, a Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus* flying over the river at dusk, two Hartlaub's Ducks *Pteronetta hartlaubii* with ducklings, Fire-crested (White-tailed) Alethe *Alethe diademata* in the forest, a stunning male Buff-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra adelberti* and several Red-vented Malimbes *Malimbus scutatus* at a nest.

Having spent the night at Zimmi, we left early next day for Gola South, where we had good views of a juvenile Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus*, Blue Cuckooshrike *Coracina azurea*, Sharpe's Apalis *Apalis sharpii*, Red-billed Helmetshrike *Prionops caniceps* and Ussher's Flycatcher *Muscicapa ussheri*. Later, we drove to the large town of Kenema and spent a couple

of hours birding the rice fields, which held three species of snipe—Jack *Lymnocryptes minimus*, Common *Gallinago gallinago* and Great Snipes *G. media*—as well as Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. Other waders included Forbes's Plover *Charadrius forbesi* as well as Palearctic migrants such as Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*.

From 16 to 19 December we visited Gola North. Having started from Kenema at 04.30 hrs, we arrived at the local village just after dawn and spent the rest of the day birding around the village and along the 9-km trail to our camp. We then enjoyed two full days of birding in the forest, followed by a final day along the trails back to the village, before returning to the hotel at Kenema. The local villagers participated in the logistical exercise of getting all the camping gear, food and cooking equipment to our forest campsite. Gola North provided views of several species that may be hard to observe elsewhere, including Afep Pigeon *Columba unicincta*, Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*, Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*, Black Dwarf *Tockus hartlaubi*, Red-billed Dwarf *T. camurus* and Brown-cheeked Hornbills *Bycanistes cylindricus*, Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis*, Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*, Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*, Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschi*, Forest Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucosticta*, Red-cheeked *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes *D. concreta*, Fraser's Sunbird *Deleornis fraseri*, Lagden's *Malaconotus lagdeni* and Many-coloured Bushshrikes *Telophorus multicolor* and everyone's favourite, a single stunning male Gola Malimbe *Malimbus balmanni*, seen after two days searching the forest. In the evenings back at camp we enjoyed the delicious food prepared by our cook, Edna, sampled the local ale and listened to the Gola North choir.

We remained in the Kenema area on 20 December. After another early start, we arrived at Kambui North in time for a pre-dawn breakfast before setting out on a long climb to the hill forest. Highlights of the morning included a single Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter toussenelii*, a flock of *c.*50 Mottled Swifts *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*, Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus rubricollis* and five species of hornbills: African Pied *Tockus fasciatus*, a single Black Dwarf, Piping *Bycanistes fistulator*, Brown-cheeked and Yellow-casqued Hornbills. Following lunch, we set off for Kambui South and our second picathartes site. Our local guide introduced us to the village elders before we climbed through the forest to the roost site. This site was more open and situated alongside a stream with a small sandy beach, which afforded us outstanding views of four White-necked Picathartes coming to roost. For an hour, we watched these magical birds just *c.*10 m away before returning to Kenema.

The final three days were spent birding in savanna between Kenema and Makeni and in the Bumbuna area. In this more open habitat birding and photography were easier. My personal highlights were Brown *Circaetus cinereus*, Western Banded *C. cinerascens* and Beaudouin's Snake Eagles *C. beaudouini*, male and female Red-chested Flufftails *Sarothrura rufa*, a male Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*, Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*, Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis*, Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Fine-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera punctuligera*, a party of White Helmetshrikes *Prionops plumatus*, White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*, several Turati's Boubou *Laniarius turatii*, Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*, Emerald Starlings *Lamprotornis iris*, Red-winged Pytilia *Pytilia phoenicoptera*, Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii*, Jambandu *Vidua raricola* and Cameroon Indigobirds *V. camerunensis*, and a male Togo Paradise Whydah *V. togoensis* in breeding plumage.

We all enjoyed our time in Sierra Leone immensely. The people are very friendly and birds are plentiful with some 340 species observed during the tour. The forests also produced eight species of primate. Thanks are due to Rockjumper for organising the tour so successfully and to David for his ability both to find new birds and ensure that all members of the party saw them well. Kenneth and the local team provided good logistical support throughout the tour. The tour continued the theme of ABC conservation tours of visiting poorer known countries with a view to finding little-known species and, in so doing, generating funds for ABC's conservation work. You can read more about Sierra Leone and its birds on the Club's website at www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/SierraLeone/introduction.html and regular visits to the home page will keep you informed about future tour plans.

Contributed by John Caddick

A request from the Slender-billed Curlew Working Group (SBCWG)

As part of the SBCWG's work, the identification of several forms of *Numenius* in the Palearctic and adjacent areas is being investigated. The group is seeking photos of Slender-billed Curlew *N. tenuirostris*, Eurasian Curlew *N. a. arquata*, and the races *N. a. orientalis* and *N. a. suschkini*, as well as the following subspecies of Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*, the nominate, *N. p. alboaxillaris*, *N. p. variegatus*, *N. p. hudsonicus* and *N. p. phaeopus*. Photographs taken in Eastern Europe / Western Asia are particularly sought. All photos should be sent to rossahmed@gmail.com; please include relevant details such as photographer, date taken and location. Photos should preferably not be 'manipulated' before sending, although edited photos are welcome.

Despite the difficult financial times, ABC has, with the much-appreciated help of sponsors, made eight new awards since my last report.

Avifaunal and threat status survey at Yala Swamp, Kenya

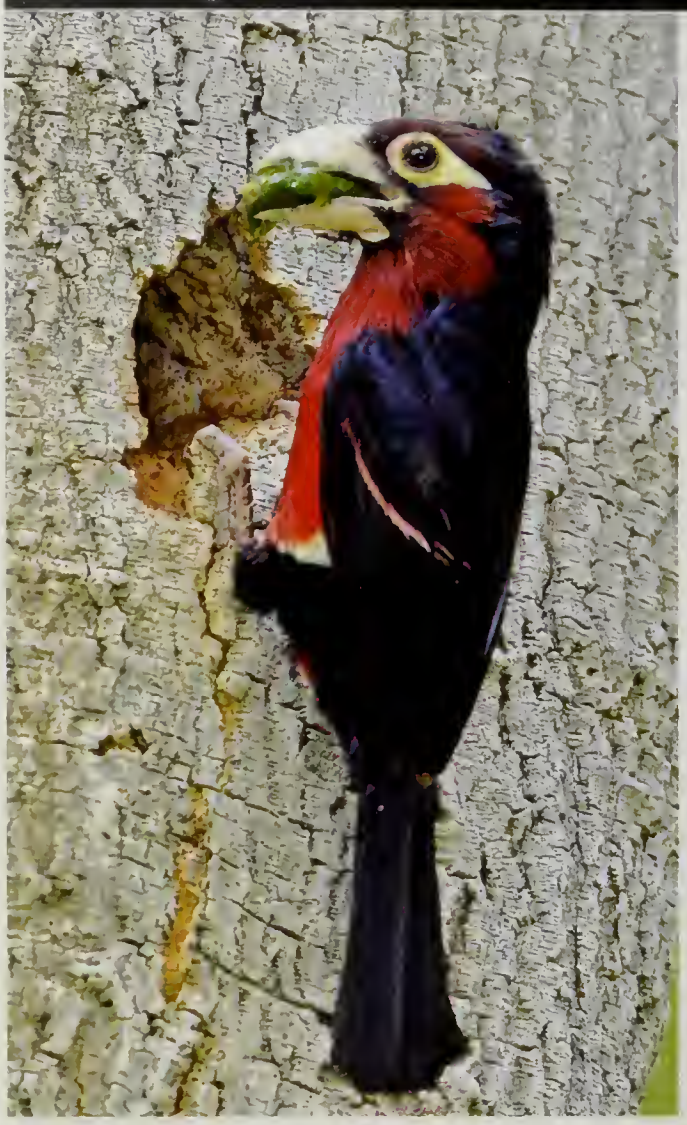
ABC awarded UK£850 to Martin Odino for an avifaunal and threat status survey in the north of Yala Swamp IBA in Kenya. This was made possible by generous sponsorship from Paul Lascelles (Hyde-Lascelles). The project's aims were to: (a) assess threats impacting the IBA inclusive of those associated with Bunyala Rice Scheme and its surroundings; (b) compile a thorough updated checklist of birds and their relative abundance; and (c) provide a basis to establish a Site Support Group. Martin led a three-person team representing the National Museums of Kenya, Ornithology Section. Wildlife Direct, a Kenyan-based international wildlife charity organisation to which Martin is affiliated, provided publicity. An assistant was hired to help with identification and data collection, and a local trainee helped disseminate the idea of a Site Support Group. Martin has already submitted an interim report, which can be seen on the ABC website. He and his team found 172 species, with Black-headed Gonolek *Laniarius erythrogaster* the most frequent, but no papyrus endemics. Worryingly, the team found much evidence of habitat destruction and encroachment on the swamp, as well as deliberate poisoning on the rice scheme land. Some 55 bird species were affected by this poisoning.

Support for Sam Osinubi

ABC made an exception to its normal guidelines and, with support from our President, Tasso Leventis, helped fund Sam Osinubi to attend a Sound Analysis Workshop organised by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in September 2009, as well as have some additional training. ABC provided UK£900. Sam is a Nigerian doctoral student, who is studying the behaviour of Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* and Yellow-breasted Boubou *Laniarius atroflavus* in Ngel-Nyaki Forest Reserve, Nigeria, which is an Important Bird Area. The forest is threatened by grazing and burning that has reduced the Afro-montane forest habitat to 7.7 km^2 within the 48 km^2 of the reserve. *L. atroflavus* is a poorly known endemic. Sam is conducting his research through the School of Biological Sciences of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. His project investigates the influence that the forest habitat has on behavioural adaptation and how this affects the fitness of the species inhabiting this threatened habitat. The focus will be on determining how territoriality, vocalisations, foraging strategy and breeding strategy are influenced by habitat quality and how adaptation has resulted in different measures of fitness. The ultimate aim is to assess the efficacy of behaviour as a rapid and accurate index of species-specific habitat quality. Sam was able to stay on for an extra week after the workshop to permit effective and complete analysis of his sound data. Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology is at the forefront of bio-acoustic research and is the developer of both the Raven and XBAT sound analysis computer programs.

Vulture awareness day in Kenya

NatureKenya received an award to help promote a Vulture Awareness Day on 10–11 October 2009 at NatureKenya's Bird Fair in the National Museum's grounds. The primary objective was to increase public understanding and compassion for vultures—one of the most threatened bird groups in the world. Vulture Awareness Day in Kenya was organised by the Raptor Working Group, a subcommittee of NatureKenya's Bird Committee, and sought to increase awareness about the need to save Kenya's vultures. NatureKenya planned to achieve this goal by operating (1) a nationwide art competition ('the role of vultures in maintaining the cycle of life') for schoolchildren, (2) a stand at the Bird Fair to educate visitors on the ecological importance of vultures and air a documentary on vulture poisoning, and (3) a play at the fair highlighting poisoning events that have decimated Kenya's vulture populations. In addition, NatureKenya aimed to raise awareness through radio programmes and articles in newspapers and magazines. ABC provided UK£1,000 towards supporting materials, banners, leaflets, radio time, booth space, audio-visuals, prizes for the



Double-toothed Barbet / Barbican bidenté *Lybius bidentatus* (Dave Richards)

art competition and other incidental costs. The ABC logo appeared on all of the publicity items.

Dispersal of Southern Masked Weaver and other passerines on the Cape Peninsula, South Africa

ABC contributed UK£500 towards this proposed study led by Dieter Oschadleus, the bird-ringing Coordinator of SAFRING, based at the Animal Demography Unit, University of Cape Town. There was to be a strong training element in bird ringing. Dieter wrote 'Natal dispersal is poorly studied in African passerine birds due to the difficulty of covering a large enough area to recapture birds ringed previously as chicks. In this study a network of sites will be used on the Cape Peninsula, where the focus will be on Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*, which

Southern Masked Weaver / Tisserin à tête rousse *Ploceus velatus* (Adam Riley)

has expanded its range into the Western Cape over the last century. The aim of this study is to use ringing to determine natal dispersal and movements by adults at the edge of the species' new range. At the same time it will be possible to study the movements of many other common passerines in the area. During Phase 1 (August–December 2009), chicks will be ringed; chicks of other species, particularly Cape Weavers *P. capensis*, will also be ringed for comparative purposes, although search effort for nests of other species will be limited to incidental finds. Phase 2 (January–December 2010) will consist of weekly mist-netting to attempt to recapture as many chicks as possible. In addition, all birds of other species caught will be ringed to study the movements of birds on the Cape Peninsula.'

Eritrean Sociable Lapwing surveys

ABC, via sponsorship from Tasso Leventis, gave UK£500 to Russom Teklay and colleagues to undertake surveys in Eritrea for Sociable Lapwings *Vanellus gregarius*. The Royal Society for Protection of Birds (BirdLife UK) provided an additional UK£750 through ABC. The project commenced in December 2009. The

Erratum (Conservation fund news on pages 6-7): Unfortunately it transpires that the plovers observed by the team in Eritrea were Black-winged Plovers (Lapwings) and not Sociable Plovers.

team aimed to explore the numbers, distribution and population trend of Sociable Lapwings in the central highlands of Eritrea, to identify special threats to the wintering site, and to increase local awareness of the birds. On the first day, the survey team reported 17 Sociable Lapwings 28 km south-west of Asmara, but next day the team counted only eight birds. On 25 December the survey team counted over 69 in the southern plains, near the small town of Dibariwa, over 12–15 km, and next day the team observed 54 around Mendefera. Russom wrote 'It is an incredible discovery, which gives real encouragement to global conservation efforts to save this Critically Endangered species'. In the last three weeks of December, the team counted a total of 208 birds. These findings offer a significant boost to conservationists working to save this rare bird from extinction in Kazakhstan, Russia and the Middle East, and the team is very optimistic that suitable conservation action can be taken at this wintering ground. Some major threats have been identified already: habitat degradation due to overgrazing, mostly near human settlements; highly reduced animal grazing, especially in remote and less populated areas, due to continuous drought, because animal manure supports increased insect abundance; and human disturbance. During the evenings, lapwings were observed being chased by domestic dogs and cats, because some birds come close to villages at this time. The team is expecting that other threats will also be identified in the future, such as food scarcity and chemical pollution.

Cape Parrots in South Africa

Dr Steve Boyes from the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute in South Africa was awarded UK£820 for a study of the incidence of psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD) virus in the largest remaining wild population of the globally threatened Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus*. Generous sponsorship by Julian Francis enabled this award. This parrot's population is estimated as 1,000–15,000 birds and is threatened by habitat loss, illegal capture for the pet trade and avian diseases. The study's primary objective is to capture as many parrots as possible to discover the incidence of PBFD and other diseases, to estimate body condition, to profile the population structure and to take blood for DNA-archiving (to be used in the forensic investigation into illegal trade). Steve will also undertake feeding trials with wild Cape Parrots in field aviaries to better understand their feeding ecology and preference for pecan nuts over indigenous food resources in Afro-montane forest patches. Dr Boyes has studied Meyer's Parrot *P. meyeri* in the Okavango Delta and has been experimenting with using nest boxes there, to determine if they can be an effective conservation tool for cavity-nesting bird communities in subtropical Africa. He aims to use data from this study to derive nest box prescriptions for use by Cape Parrots. This was the subject of a second application, but unfortunately ABC was unable to fund this. However, ABC Council member Stephen Cameron very kindly helped sponsor this project. Steve recently wrote 'We had Green Wood-hoopoes *Phoeniculus purpureus*, Woodland Kingfishers *Halcyon senegalensis* and

Cape Parrot / Perroquet du Cap *Poicephalus robustus* (R. S. Boyes)

African Grey Hornbills *Tockus nasutus* nesting with signs of several successful attempts (i.e. good layer of excrement) in *c.*30% of the nest boxes, as well as several mammal species. We also mapped all the habitat types, located over 500 excavated nest cavities and did five cavity-nesting bird abundance transects in each habitat type.'

Study of birds at Lake Nasser in winter 2009/2010

In *Bull. ABC* 16: 137, I reported on an award towards a raptor training workshop organised by Haitham Ibrahim *et al.* in Egypt. Due to communication problems, the UK£850 awarded by ABC was not taken up, but the workshop went ahead successfully. Haitham submitted a new application, which has been approved by Council and he has now received the same amount from ABC for a survey, very kindly sponsored by Tasso Leventis. The project aims to survey birds at Lake Nasser, comparing sites on the eastern and western shores of the lake and in Wadi Allaqi Biosphere Reserve, and also to build the capacity of young people working for the Nature Conservation Sector of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (NCS/EEAA) and students at the University of South Valley. It also aims to raise awareness among local communities (fishermen, farmers and Bedouins) in the area. The Nile Valley and the Red Sea coast are important bird migration routes through Africa. Lake Nasser, which was created in 1964, is 496 km long with a mean width of 15 km. Water levels fluctuate greatly, between seasons and years, depending on the net annual volume of water it receives. Lake Nasser is one of the world's largest man-made lakes with a very complex nature shoreline composed of numerous khors (inundated desert wadis). The shallow waters of these khors support aquatic flora and provide good breeding grounds for fish, whilst their often gently sloping shores permit vegetation to grow. In contrast, much of the rest of the lake's shores are steep and rocky with little vegetation. Many islands (the tops of inundated hills) are widespread in the lake. Fishing and related activities are considered one of the main threats to birds at Lake Nasser, whilst farmers use pesticides on their crops, which kill birds and other wildlife. The Egyptian government is planning to resettle more of the surrounding land by the year 2017. Haitham considers that swift action is needed to collect data and raise the awareness of decision-makers and stakeholders about the area's birds.

A database to monitor common birds and record rare sightings and range extensions in Kenya

After discussions with Ian Fisher who is overseeing Kenya Birdfinder–Worldbirds, the Conservation Committee approved this application, subject to suggestions made by Ian being taken up. An award of UK£1,000 will be made, kindly sponsored by Tasso Leventis. The Bird Committee of NatureKenya is very keen to pursue this work. Oliver Nasirwa wrote that 'we are hopeful that with the renewed interest and support from the National Museums of Kenya, the work of collating and managing bird records will get back on track. With this work running we hope that we shall find ways of addressing capacity issues that have led to the record keeping falling behind.'

Further work on Djibouti Francolin in the Mabla Mountains, Djibouti

ABC has agreed to award UK£1,000 towards field work costs for a follow-up survey to the March 2009 work on the highly threatened Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* in the eastern Mabla Mountains, an Important Bird Area in Djibouti, from which a provisional population estimate of 108 birds was derived (*cf. Bull. ABC* 16: 138). This was the first systematic survey of the species at this site. Unfortunately, access to the western and northern sides of the mountains was impractical due to security concerns at the time. Analysis of Google Earth images and conversations with a local shepherd suggest that there is potential habitat elsewhere in the mountains and that francolins are present. The team for the March 2010 survey, Houssein Rayaleh and Aden Dini, will visit the west and north sides of the mountains to determine if francolins are present and perform transects to prepare a more accurate population estimate for this endangered endemic. As with the March

Male Djibouti Francolin / Francolin somali *Francolinus ochropectus* (Geoff & Hilary Welch)

2009 survey, the standard survey methodology developed by the World Pheasant Association in the species' main stronghold of the Forêt du Day will be used, and information on habitat structure and current or potential threats to the species will also be collected. Houssein Rayaleh is Executive Secretary of Djibouti Nature, the principal nature conservation NGO in Djibouti, and the country's most experienced native ornithologist; he was a key member of the March 2009 survey.

Reports

Plight of vultures in Somaliland

Abdi Jama recently sent a report on the second part of his survey, east of 45°E to the environs of Erigavo, the capital of the massive Sanaag region. Abdi's first stop was the old Burao city dump where, *c.*18 months previously, Egyptian *Neophron percnopterus*, Lappet-faced *Torgos tracheliotus*, Rüppell's *Gyps rueppellii* and White-backed Vultures *G. africanus* had been present. He reports: 'This time Egyptian and Lappet-faced Vultures were present in good numbers, but Rüppell's was absent and just one White-backed Vulture was seen. As we headed east, almost every hamlet we passed had its own contingent Egyptian Vultures, but visits to interior bush communities revealed that the semi-commensal existence of Egyptian Vultures petered out as we entered poorer areas with apparently little to scavenge on. Not a single Egyptian Vulture was seen away from established villages and towns. We did not see any other vultures (other than the ubiquitous Egyptian) between Burao and Yuffle, a distance of *c.*400 km, other than a single contingent of 12 Lappet-faced Vultures, attesting to the drastic decline of vultures. Furthermore, the large dump just outside Erigavo had been cleared for development since the team's last visit and the vultures were gone completely. Possible causes for the absence of vultures could include the general environment being cleaner and, perhaps, the decline in the once-abundant livestock herds and antelope. The string of drought years since the 1990s has possibly also reduced the food source for vulture species.'

ABC is particularly grateful to the individual sponsors who have personally pledged support for particular projects. This is a really valuable way to help the Club to achieve one of its main aims—to assist individuals and small groups undertake research that advances our knowledge of African birds. Several members have indicated that they are interested in helping the Club in this work, and without any obligation they are sent details of projects that the Conservation Committee feel merit support. If you would be interested in finding out how you can support projects such as these, please contact ABC Chairman, Keith Betton (chairman@africanbirdclub).

Steph Tyler, on behalf of the Conservation Committee

Africa Round-up

General

Translating biodiversity monitoring into action

In late 2009, BirdLife Partners from eight countries attended a workshop in Entebbe, Uganda, to discuss how to turn monitoring results from Africa's Protected Area / Important Bird Area (IBA) network into policies and actions that ensure their sustainable use and improve the livelihoods of local communities. The workshop was organised to share ideas and learn lessons from across the BirdLife Africa Partnership. At present, 163 African IBAs are also Protected Areas. These sites are monitored to establish the state of their bird populations, identify the pressures that they face and to outline responses which counter these pressures. Humans are responsible for many threats to IBAs but climate change, with impacts already visible, may be the most serious threat of all. "African countries are most vulnerable to its [climate change] devastating impacts and least able to adapt", said Jessica Eriyo (Minister of Environment of the Republic of Uganda) who opened the workshop. "Climate change is affecting wildlife in the same manner it is affecting the people", Ms Eriyo added. In keeping with the theme of the workshop, the Minister encouraged delegates to engage in advocacy with a meaning in order to address challenges facing both the people and the environment. Participants committed themselves to: influence governments to designate IBAs as legally Protected Areas and allocate adequate resources for enforcement of the conservation policies; influence landowners to adopt wise-use principles in water catchments and basins; lobby for inclusion of bird species as indicators for biodiversity within National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans; and, ensure full enforcement of national Environmental Impact Assessment regulations, among other actions. The workshop was facilitated by a team of experts with regional and international experience, and included lectures, discussions, group exercises, case studies from Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tunisia, and a field visit to the Lutembe Bay IBA. The workshop was organised and sponsored by the BirdLife Africa IBA/PA Monitoring Project funded by the European Commission through the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK) and was hosted by Nature Uganda.

Source: BirdLife International press release, October 2009

Wildlife poisoning in Africa

A widely available poison is being used to kill thousands of birds every month in an area of Kenya, and by game poachers in Botswana to kill vultures. The poisoning of wildlife seems to have increased across the continent recently, and BirdLife is calling for increased concerted efforts to address this threat. Situated in western Kenya near Lake Victoria and the Ugandan border, the Bunyala Rice Scheme is a heavily irrigated area, and the water-logging also creates suitable feeding habitat for many birds, which are being targeted by local people who view the meat as a delicacy. The poison used is called Carbofuran (or Furadan) and is designed to control insects in a wide variety of field crops. However, it is also toxic to animals, and has one of the highest acute toxicities to humans of any insecticide widely used on field crops. In Bunyala the poison is placed inside snail shells. Decoy birds are also used, and poachers disturb the surroundings to encourage wild birds to settle into the baited areas. Once captured, target birds are killed and sold for human consumption.

White-backed Vultures / Vautours africains *Gyps africanus* (Daniel Cornelis)

Throughout eastern and southern Africa there are increasing reports of the use of Carbofuran to illegally poison wildlife. In Botswana, poachers have recently been observed lacing giraffe carcasses with poison to attract vultures and kill them. In two recent incidents, over 80 vultures including White-backed *Gyps africanus* and Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* have been deliberately poisoned in the country.

The BirdLife Africa Partnership and many other conservation organisations across Africa—like Wildlife Direct—are already working to address this problem and are calling for increased efforts to deal with it. In Kenya, Martin Odino from the National Museums of Kenya—with funding from the African Bird Club and Rufford Small Grants—is working with NatureKenya (the BirdLife Partner) to quantify the threat, focusing specifically on the Bunyala Rice Scheme. BirdLife Botswana is also working to educate local people about the use of poisons. In response to problems caused by wildlife poisoning across the continent,

the BirdLife Africa Secretariat has also been focusing on chemicals and drugs as one of the threats to birds and their habitats. Over 2,000 posters are being distributed to raise awareness of the threat to vultures and coordinated counts will be undertaken in East Africa to verify the extent of the problem and make recommendations for mitigation. A high-resolution PDF of the poster is available at www.birdlife.org/regional/africa/pdfs/vulture_poster_highres.pdf. It may be possible to send copies to institutions / individuals who need several-high quality copies; e-mail: paul.ndanganga@birdlife.or.ke

Source: BirdLife International press release, November 2009

BirdLife Africa Wildlife Clubs Project

The BirdLife Africa Wildlife Clubs Project has taken a step closer to its goal of connecting over 400,000 children across the continent with conservationists around the world. The project combines biodiversity conservation with education and sustainable development initiatives, and uses bird conservation to help bridge the digital divide in Africa. Along with the people responsible for the project, representatives from 13 other environmental organisations and educational institutions participated in a workshop in Accra, Ghana.

The workshop's host, the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS; BirdLife in Ghana), has unrivalled experience in organising environmental education and conservation activity among young people. The junior wing of GWS, the Wildlife Clubs of Ghana, recently celebrated its 21st birthday. Starting with just two clubs in 1987, it now has over 1,000 clubs throughout the country. The participants developed a wildlife club / environmental education coordinators' network, reviewed the contents of a draft manual for wildlife clubs in Africa, and discussed ways of persuading national governments to incorporate the manual into their education systems.

As part of the project, BirdLife Zimbabwe recently organised a High Schools Public Speaking Competition in partnership with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and the Mukuvisi Woodlands Association. Schoolchildren from around Harare were given questions posed by BirdLife Zimbabwe and EMA. Mukuvisi Woodlands sourced varied prizes and BirdLife Zimbabwe donated *Enjoy the Birds of Zimbabwe* books to the children. Additional prizes were donated by the British Council, WWF, EMA and the IUCN.

Source: BirdLife International press release, September 2009

Cory's Shearwater / Puffin cendré *Calonectris diomedea* (Augusto Faustino)

Spatial segregation between two closely related shearwaters breeding in sympatry

Joan Navarro and co-workers used satellite-tracking and stable isotope data to study spatial segregation of Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea borealis* and Scopoli's Shearwaters *C. d. diomedea* breeding in sympatry at a Mediterranean colony. It was found that Cory's foraged mainly in the Atlantic, whilst Scopoli's fed exclusively in proximity to the breeding colony in the Mediterranean. This segregation could reflect the foraging behaviour of Cory's Shearwaters before they arrived in the Mediterranean from the nearby Atlantic colonies: they probably have remained faithful to their previous foraging area in the Atlantic. Alternatively, Cory's Shearwaters are larger and have a greater wing loading compared with Scopoli's, and therefore are probably better prepared to fly across the strong winds in the Strait of Gibraltar. The wintering areas of both taxa were also different: Cory's Shearwaters wintered along the coast of southern Africa, whereas Scopoli's wintered mainly in the Canary Islands Current.

Source: Biol. Lett. *5, pp. 545–548*

Understanding the Amur Falcon's migrations

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* conducts one of the most remarkable of avian migrations: the birds leave their Asian breeding range and travel to north-east India and Bangladesh, where they fatten up for the overland flight over peninsular India. It is believed to then undertake the longest regular over-water passage of any raptor, crossing the Indian Ocean between south-west India and tropical East Africa, a journey of >4,000 km, which also includes nocturnal flight. Birds arrive in their southern African winter range in November–December and depart by early May. In contrast, its return is probably largely overland, to the north and west of its southbound route. However, recent observations in late November–early December in Ethiopia suggest that there may be a regular overland passage at higher latitudes than previously known. Now, BirdLife South Africa, Microwave Telemetry, Inc., USA, and members of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey have commenced a satellite telemetry programme to study the migration routes and other aspects of the biology of this little-known raptor. At the largest winter roost known in South Africa (numbering *c.*26,000 birds) almost 50 birds were trapped in early 2010, and the biggest ten adults were fitted with 5g solar-powered satellite tags. Even

Amur Falcon / Faucon de l'Amour *Falco amurensis* (Phil Palmer, www.Birdholidays.co.uk)

after just a few days surprising new information was gathered, with one female roosting >100 km from the trap site.

Source: Bernd Meyburg in litt. *to AfricanBirding January 2010*

More Eleonora's Falcons GPS-tagged

Following a German's team study using GPS-tagged Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonorae* (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 14), four Eleonora's Falcons were fitted with satellite transmitters in Greece in spring 2009, to investigate the migration routes followed by the birds to their wintering areas in south-east Africa and Madagascar. The four started their journey to Africa in mid October. By late October, two were in Sudan, one in western Ethiopia and one in central Egypt. In early November, two had reached Madagascar, whilst the other two remained in central Africa, in Chad and Central African Republic, respectively. For maps showing the migratory routes of the four birds, see the website below.

Source: www.ornithologiki.gr/life/falcoel/en/program/satellite_map.htm

North Africa

Local group makes its mark at Egypt's Lake Qarun

Egypt's first Important Bird Area (IBA) Site Support Group (SSG) (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 144) has persuaded one of the country's largest construction groups to end the dumping of waste at Lake Qarun, which supports regionally important numbers of wintering waterbirds. Lake Qarun occupies the deepest part of the Fayoum Depression, >40 m below sea level. Once a large body of fresh water, the lake now receives almost all its water as drainage from irrigated land. As a result, and because the only outflow is via evaporation, levels of salinity have been steadily increasing. Because of these environmental changes, a local subspecies of Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala norrisae* has become extinct, while Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*, which first breed

Slender-billed Gull / Goéland railleur *Larus genei* (Georges Olioso)

in the 1990s, now numbers *c.*8,500 pairs. Numbers of breeding Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* also meet IBA criteria, as does the wintering population of Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*. A salt extraction processing plant has been set up, which over time will improve water quality and permit habitats to be restored, as well as providing employment. However, unregulated tourist development in the south of the lake is destroying the best waterbird habitats and leading to increased disturbance. Hunters, including organised parties from Europe, regularly ignore the lake's protected status.

The SSG was established to enhance biodiversity conservation and benefit-sharing with local communities, in recognition that local people could make a significant contribution towards conservation efforts by reducing exploitation and hunting in the protected area. Its members have removed shooting blinds used by duck hunters, and plan to erect signboards with information about the lake and its importance as an IBA. They are also involved in awareness-raising and education activities with schoolchildren. The local government has an ecotourism strategy for Lake Qarun, so when the construction company began work on a tourist development, the SSG went into action, and the bulldozers were quickly pulled back to 30 m from the shoreline. The construction company's owner has pledged to set aside a proportion of his shoreline for saltmarshes to be re-established, providing a small bird sanctuary on the lake. This was to have been a hunting lodge in his original plan, and he has made a commitment not to allow or sanction hunting parties along the lake.

Source: BirdLife International press release, September 2009; World Birdwatch *31(4), p. 7*

Range extension of Plain Martin in north-western Morocco

In November 2007–February 2008, Plain Martins *Riparia paludicola* were found breeding in an abandoned sand extraction site at Lower Loukkos, north-western Morocco. This is the north-westernmost breeding record of this species in the country and constitutes a range extension of *c.*100 km from Khenichet, the nearest previously known breeding site. Morocco's isolated population of the endemic subspecies *R. p. mauritanica*, has steadily expanded its range north since the 1960s.

Source: Dutch Birding *31, pp. 304–306*

Mute Swan in Algeria

In February 2009, three Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* were photographed at Lake Tonga, a Ramsar site in north-east Algeria. There are very few previous records of any *Cygnus* species in the country, the most recent in the late 1990s.

Source: Alauda *77, p. 314*

A Humblot's Heron in Tunisia

Endemic to the Malagasy region, the rare Humblot's Heron *Ardea humbloti*, which was photographed at Oued Gouifla in October 2008, seems a highly unlikely vagrant. However, to date, the observers have been unable to locate any captive individuals in, for instance, Europe that might otherwise account for the record.

Source: Alauda *77, p. 313*

A migration bottleneck in Egypt

Gudrun Hilgerloh of the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz has provided some counts from a migration bottleneck on Egypt's Red Sea coast, at Zait Bay, in the coastal desert west of the main Suez–Hurghada road. Counts in late

February–early May 2007 produced almost 125,000 storks and nearly 40,000 raptors, with nearly 180,000 soaring birds counted in all.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *19, pp. 338–352*

Atlantic Ocean Islands

Aberrantly dark Fea's Petrel found in the Cape Verde Islands

In March 2007, an odd Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* was trapped and photographed on Fogo, Cape Verde Islands. Unlike normal birds, which are clean white below, the entire underparts of this individual were ashy grey and the underwing-coverts lacked any white. The head was also darker than in normal birds. Melanism is considered to be a very rare phenomenon in Procellariiformes, with only five known cases up to 2005, none of which referred to Fea's Petrel or the closely related Zino's Petrel *P. madeira*.

Source: Dutch Birding *31, pp. 302–304*

The former range of the Razo Lark

The Critically Endangered Razo Lark *Alauda razae*, which is nowadays restricted to the tiny island of Raso, in the Cape Verde archipelago, and is thought to number in the region of just 100 individuals, was formerly present on the other north-western islands of Santo Antão, São Vicente and Santa Luzia. This is the finding of a group of Spanish researchers, based on a survey of subfossil bone deposits from all of the ten major islands of the Cape Verdes. All of the deposits date from before the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century. This finding confirms previous speculation that the species' modern range is relictual and that the Razo Lark was formerly more widespread.

Source: Alauda *77, pp. 309–312*

Last words on the kites of the Cape Verdes?

Sabine Hille (University of Wien) and Nigel Collar (BirdLife) have taken a detailed look at the *Milvus* kites in the Cape Verde Islands. Sadly, it seems that the Red Kite *M. milvus fasciicauda* which occurred on the north-west and south-west islands of the group is almost or actually extinct; and numbers of Black Kite *M. migrans*, which occurs on the eastern islands and differs morphometrically from mainland birds, are critically low. There has been much confusion between these forms. Many earlier visitors did not realise that two forms occur in the archipelago, and it may now already be too late to save either bird.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *129, pp. 217–221*

More on Cape Verde Warbler

A recent survey of the island of Fogo, in the Cape Verde Islands, found that Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* is widespread across the northern half of the island between 200 m and 975 m, with an estimated total population of 500 pairs there. On Fogo, the species favours coffee plantations and other introduced crops, including maize. The authors of the study, Jens Hering and Elmar Fuchs, also looked at the species' breeding biology, and found that both sexes are responsible for incubating the eggs.

Source: Vogelwarte *47, pp. 157–164*

Red-billed Tropicbird breeding in the Canary Islands

In November 2007, a pair of Red-billed Tropicbirds *Phaethon aethereus* was found breeding in the Canaty Islands for the first time, on the westernmost island of El Hierro. One young successfully fledged. The next year, a pair again bred successfully on the island. The nearest breeding sites of this species are in the Cape Verde Islands and on Îles de la Madeleine, off Dakar, Senegal, 1,300 and 1,400 km distant, respectively.

Red-billed Tropicbird / Phaéton à bec rouge *Phaethon aethereus* (Augusto Faustino)

Source: Quercus *281, p. 44 (July 2009)*

West & Central Africa

Black-tailed Godwit / Barge à queue noire *Limosa limosa* (John Caddick)

Black-tailed Godwit's migration followed by satellite

A Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* fitted with a satellite transmitter flew non-stop within 48 hours from the Netherlands to Senegal via Spain and over the Sahara, a distance of over 4,000 km. Its average speed was nearly 80 km per hour. In May 2009, Theunis Piersma's research group fitted 15 Black-tailed Godwits in Friesland, Netherlands, with tiny transmitters that were placed into the abdominal cavity of the birds. The researchers are intent on discovering exactly how the birds migrate between their winter and summer grounds and, for example, whether they migrate in a 'loop'. Indeed, it looks as if at least some godwits that arrive in West Africa via Spain and Morocco, use a more easterly route, via Mali and Italy, to return to their breeding grounds in Friesland. The project has revealed that the godwits have a flexible strategy, both during their migration and on their wintering grounds. The satellite-wearing godwits started to leave in late June and all had departed Friesland by early August. One bird initially also flew to Senegal, but continued to Guinea-Bissau and,

follwing a three-month stay, flew 1,200 km east to the Niger Delta in Mali, where it was killed in a fishing net in November. The migration routes of the birds can be seen at www.vogelbescherming.nl/grutto

Source: http://www.rug.nl/biologie/102_09

A scops owl on Príncipe?

The Gulf of Guinea islands of São Tomé and Príncipe are well known for their spectacular avian endemism, but no owl species is definitely known from the latter island, despite the presence of an endemic scops owl, *Otus hartlaubi*, on São Tomé. Martim Melo and Martin Dallimer have recently published details of their recordings of owl-like calls in low-altitude primary forest on Príncipe during surveys in 2007. The calls are within the frequency range of *Otus* owls and differ from known, non-avian calls, suggesting that an endemic scops owl is present on the island, as had been speculatively reported since as long ago as 1928.

Source: Malimbus *31, pp. 109–115*

Partnerships strengthen migratory bird conservation in West Africa

Six countries in West Africa have committed to conserving Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for migrant birds along their coastlines, following a recent joint workshop organised by BirdLife and Wetlands International. "The project offers an opportunity for coordinated monitoring and conservation of IBAs along the coast of West Africa, and for capacity building, which is crucial for migratory bird conservation, as well as enhancement of the livelihoods of local communities", said Dr Hazell Thompson, Africa regional director of BirdLife International.

Over 40% of long-distance migrants in the African-Eurasian flyway have shown signs of decline during the last three decades. Of these 10% are classified by BirdLife as globally threatened or Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. Along the coast of West Africa—from Guinea to Mauritania—over 170 migrants have been recorded

Marbled Teal / Marmaronette marbrée *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (Georges Olioso)

Aquatic Warbler / Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola* (Bruno Portier)

including the Vulnerable Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, and the Near Threatened Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. However, of the 43 IBAs in the region that qualify for their migratory birds, 22 lack any conservation action. Key threats identified include agricultural intensification, pollution, commercial and residential development, unsustainable harvesting and hunting, modification of habitats such as wetlands, invasive species and human disturbance. Some of the critical IBAs for migratory birds in the region include Banc d'Arguin National Park and Chott Boul (Mauritania), Delta du Saloum and Djoudj Wetlands (Senegal), Arquipélago dos Bijagós (Guinea Bissau), Sierra Leone River Estuary, and Iles Tristão (Guinea).

Participants from Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Gambia met at the four-day workshop in Dakar, Senegal. They represented civil society organisations, government institutions and conservation programmes and initiatives in the region. Together, they identified and agreed on a network of sites and species, as well as a menu of conservation actions that will be undertaken over the four-year life span of the project.

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2009

White-necked Picathartes survey in Gola Forest, Sierra Leone

A survey conducted in October 2006–January 2007 within Gola Forest Reserve and in surrounding community forest found 47 White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* breeding sites, of which 35 were active. A total of 109 active nests were counted, 64 of them located within the reserve. It is possible that the actual number is slightly higher, as some undiscovered nest colonies could exist at remote locations in the reserve.

Source: Ibis *152, p. 205*

Grey-necked Picathartes survey in Cameroon

Taku Awa *et al.* from Reading University, in the UK, surveyed Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in various parts of the Cameroon mountains, in particular Mbam Minkom Mountain Forest. During a complete survey in January–March 2006 they found 90 breeding and 24 potential breeding sites, but the whole area is under considerable pressure from agricultural encroachment and illegal timber use. The authors suggest various possible remedial actions and that the situation needs to be monitored.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *19, pp. 254–264*

Good news for Ibadan Malimbe

The globally Endangered Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis*, whose population is considered to number fewer than 2,500 individuals confined to a tiny area circumscribed by Ibadan, Ife, Iperu and Ilaro, in south-west Nigeria, has recently been discovered in the Ifon Forest Reserve,

a newly created protected area of 282 km², which now qualifies as an Important Bird Area. The finding extends the species' range *c.*140 km to the east, and observations made in the reserve suggest some degree of dependence on Kola *Cola gigantea* trees, a previously unknown association.

Source: Malimbus *31, pp. 121–122*

Plantations are not only bad news for birds

Lars Holbech of the University of Ghana has been looking at tree crop plantations and their use by, mainly lower storey, forest birds. Such plantations have included rustic cocoa, neglected coconut and various plantations of exotic tree species. He found that those areas adjacent to or within large forest areas are superior to smaller areas near small species-poor forests, and a high forest tree density and a luxuriant undergrowth that is uncut for several years are the most important actors permitting forest specialists to survive. Fifty percent of species of conservation importance were found in such plantations, thus revealing that they are an important reservoir for such species. The considerable majority of the plantations lack formal protection.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *19, pp. 287–308*

São Tomé Short-tail is more widespread than thought

A team from the São Tomé Association of Biology has found three, perhaps four, family groups of the São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagii* in the montane forests of the island. Previously the species was thought only to occur in the lowlands, but clearly it breeds higher up too. Similarly, one individual of Newton's Fiscal *Lanius newtoni* was also found. Perhaps the conservation of both these species is not quite as critical as was thought?

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *129, pp. 213–216*

East Africa

East African Rarities Committee changes its remit

The East African Rarities Committee has just changed its remit and will now consider the first to fifth records of any species from each of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It is hoped that this will make it easier for observers to establish whether their sightings need to be submitted to the committee or not. If you see a species that has been recorded fewer than five times in any of the three countries please submit details to the EARC Secretary, Jeremy Lindsell, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK, e-mail: jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk. Past records of such rarities are also sought.

Source: D. J. Fisher in litt. *2009*

NABU protects unique wild coffee forests in Ethiopia

NABU (BirdLife in Germany), in partnership with the Ethiopian government and others, is to operate a project to protect the last natural forests where the world famous 'arabica' coffee is produced. In the last ten years, almost 43% of these forests have disappeared, having been transformed into arable land. "The clearing of tropical forests is a major source of greenhouse gases. Over the past 40 years, 35% of Ethiopian forests have been lost through deforestation. If we do not act now, Ethiopia will lose all its forests by 2020", said NABU's President. Experts estimate that the remaining forest—*c.*200,000 ha—contains *c.*25 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in soil biomass. It absorbs 600,000 tonnes p.a. of the harmful greenhouse gas from the atmosphere. The NABU project will provide the restoration of 700 ha of natural forest and cultivated areas with native wildlife and timber, whilst the reforestation of 10,000 ha will be jointly managed with the Biosphere Reserve following the principles of sustainable forestry. Special tourist infrastructures, such as animal and birdwatching towers, outdoor museums and hiking trails will also be constructed. After receiving special training, local people will be able to guide tourists and explain the effects of climate change and agriculture practices.

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2009

Natron community vows to protect its flamingos

Villagers around Tanzania's Lake Natron have vowed to protect the lake and its Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* from industrial development. BirdLife's Tanzanian Partner—the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST)—has put forward an alternative to the environmentally destructive soda ash extraction plant proposed for the lake, calling instead for its unmatched tourism potential to be developed, and for the people of Lake Natron to be enabled to benefit from the income generated. Three-quarters of the global Lesser Flamingo population occurs in East Africa, with Lake Natron by far their most important breeding site. In 2007, the Indian-based multinational company, Lake Natron Resources Ltd., proposed to construct a major soda ash extraction plant to exploit the very alkaline nature of the lake (see *Bull. ABC* 15: 18).

The company appears to have withdrawn its interest following a successful appeal by BirdLife and the Lake Natron Consultative Group, a coalition of community and environmental groups in East Africa. But in 2009 BirdLife learned that the Tanzanian government had published invitations to tender for soda extraction equipment, and plans an extension of the rail network to link Lake Natron to the port of Tanga. The government subsequently denied being responsible for the invitations. Speaking at a meeting organised by WCST, a Maasai elder, Lasoi Ole Nareshoi, said: "God gave us this resource for use by ourselves, our children and children's children. We will protect it from any industrial exploitation that may chase away the flamingos and damage the environment". Paul Nnyiti, of the

WCST, said the time had come for stakeholders and the government to come to the assistance of the Lake Natron community so that they can benefit from tourism, whilst Ken Mwathe, who is the Coordinator of the Lake Natron Consultative Group, said that although the soda ash mining plans have been put on hold, stakeholders remain worried that the plans have not been abandoned.

Source: BirdLife International press release, October 2009; World Birdwatch *31(4), p. 7*

House Crows eradicated from Socotra

House Crows *Corvus splendens*, which are native to the Indian subcontinent and are recognised as an invasive species in many parts of the world, were eradicated from Socotra, Yemen, in 2009. The first individuals arrived in 1996 and the population built up slowly to ten pairs, raising concerns about the damage the species could do to native biodiversity. Over the last 150 years the species has been spreading, aided largely by ships, which have enabled them to colonise many parts of the Arabian Peninsula. In mainland Yemen, they had reached a high density by the 1980s, posing a threat to agriculture. Half a million were exterminated, but complete eradication proved impossible.

Source: Sandgrouse *31, p. 204 & www.birdwatch.co.uk/website/content/view/2673/32/*

Indian Ocean Islands

Madagascar NGOs unite against plunder of natural resources

Asity Madagascar (BirdLife in Madagascar) has joined a group of Malagasy civil society organisations, Voahary Gasy, in calling for an end to the plundering of natural resources in the national parks of north-east Madagascar. Following the change of government in March 2009, all but essential humanitarian aid has been withdrawn by the international community, leaving Madagascar's national park and forestry services practically unfunded. Loggers have moved into protected areas, removing valuable hardwoods such as rosewood, ebony and mahogany. They work for influential business people in possession of illegal but 'official' documentation permitting them to export these hardwoods. Local communities who depend on forest resources and tourism have been threatened and attacked for their opposition to these highly destructive activities. A new trade in bushmeat has developed and lemurs in particular are being killed in large numbers. Several endemic birds are largely or entirely confined to pristine primary forest in this region, including the Endangered Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur* and Vulnerable Helmet Vanga *Euryceros prevostii* and Bernier's Vanga *Oriolia bernieri*. With the complete breakdown of protected area regulation, and armed gangs operating with impunity in the forests, it is impossible to assess the impact on these and other threatened species.

Voahary Gasy is calling for an immediate halt to exports of hardwoods, particularly rosewood, the enforcement of protected area regulation, the creation of a task force to combat environmental crime, and a campaign to raise awareness within Madagascar of the nature and extent of the destruction of the island's remaining forests. The umbrella organisation is also emphasising that the range of new and extreme threats to Madagascar's environment and biodiversity is very broad and not restricted to the north-east of the country or to precious hardwoods. Other parts of the country, and valuable resources such as reptiles, shark fins and rare plants, are also affected or at least at risk. Asity Madagascar is working with other groups to control or prevent problems in the far south-east, where the largest expanse of lowland forest, Tsitongambarika, is under threat, and similar initiatives are taking place elsewhere. "These events are a disaster for Madagascar, profiting a tiny number of individuals at immense cost to the country's economy and extraordinary heritage", said Dr Roger Safford, Senior Programme Manager at BirdLife International. "The global community must help to resolve the situation, but the emergence of Voahary Gasy is a very positive step, showing the commitment of Malagasy institutions and individuals to lead in publicising and tackling the problems."

Source: World Birdwatch *31(4), p. 10*

Southern Africa

Pygmy Falcon / Fauconnet d'Afrique *Polihierax semitorquatus* (Dave Richards)

Polyandrous Pygmy Falcons

During a photographic trip to the Kalahari Desert, in August 2009, photographer Albie Venter documented two different male Pygmy Falcons *Polihierax semitorquatus* copulating with the same female, which had a nest nearby. An instance of cooperative breeding, wherein two male Pygmy Falcons had provisioned a single female, had been documented recently but such behaviour was unexplained, until now. It seems that, at least occasionally, the more strikingly coloured female Pygmy Falcon may avail herself of more than one mate.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *14(6), pp. 16–18*

Avian biodiversity in South Africa and the BirdLife South Africa List Committee

There has recently been a major focus on the Southern African bird list, which includes the seven countries south of the Zambezi River. Remarkably, South Africa itself has never received much attention, and few birders even know how many species this remarkably diverse

country holds. BirdLife South Africa has now reconvened the BirdLife South Africa List Committee and the resulting official South Africa bird list contains 90% of the species known from the entire southern African sub-region. The South African bird list (which can be downloaded on the BirdLife South Africa website: www.birdlife.org.za) includes 841 species, plus another seven occurring in South African territory, on the subantarctic Prince Edward Islands. The list is highly conservative, as vagrants have been subject to approval by BirdLife South Africa's Rarities Committee. Of the 841 bird species recorded in South Africa, 20 are true endemics, 50 others are near-endemics occurring in Swaziland and Lesotho or very marginally spreading into countries further north, three are breeding endemics and one is apparently a winter endemic (Long-tailed Pipit *Anthus longicaudatus*), whilst 120 are vagrants and of the remaining 721, 80% are resident. An exciting prospect is that all nine provinces of South Africa may hold new species for the South African list. Limpopo and North West provinces are diverse yet relatively poorly studied, whilst the Northern Cape has an unidentified canary that could even be new to science. The coastal provinces could generate new seabirds and waders, and the Eastern Cape has also been poorly explored. Chris Lotz, Chairman of BirdLife South Africa's List Committee, urges birders to submit sightings of species new to the South Africa list to the BirdLife South Africa Rarities Committee and the List Committee; please contact him for more information (info@birdingecotours.co.za).

Source: Chris Lotz in litt. January 2010

Damara Terns in Angola

While it has been strongly suspected for some years that the globally Near Threatened Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum* might breed in extreme south-western Angola, specifically in the region of the Baia dos Tigres, irrefutable evidence for this was lacking until January 2009. In that month, Rob Simmons visited

Damara Tern / Sterne des baleiniers *Sterna balaenarum* (Peter Ryan)

this remote area with the express intention of surveying it for the species. His trip was fantastically successful; around 35 km north of the Cunene River mouth, Rob found a breeding colony of Damara Terns numbering approximately 570 individuals and 200 pairs. He found five nests with either eggs or young.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *14(6), pp. 56–60*

Taxonomic proposals

A new boubou species

Laniarius willardi has been described as a new species of boubou from the Albertine Rift by a team of researchers, based on its grey to blue-grey irides, external morphometrics and genetic data, which indicate that its closest relative is Mountain Sooty Boubou *L. poensis camerunensis* from Cameroon. Crimson-breasted Bushshrike *L. atrococcineus* and Sooty Boubou *L. leucorhynchus* are together the sister clade to *L. willardi* / *L. p. camerunensis*. *Laniarius willardi* (the specific name honours David Willard, Curator of Birds at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History) and the geographically sympatric *L. p. holomelas* differ by 11.5% in uncorrected sequence divergence, whilst elevational data from specimens suggest the possibility of elevational segregation at *c.*2,000 m, with *L. willardi* occurring below this. The team's broad sampling of black and sooty boubou taxa also indicate that: *L. poensis* races do not form a monophyletic clade; *L. p. camerunensis* may represent multiple, non-sister lineages; and that at least one race of Fülleborn's Black Boubou *L. fuelleborni usambaricus* is genetically distinct from the other races of that species.

Source: Auk *online, doi:10.1525/auk.2009.09014*

A new 'Winifred's Warbler' species

Rauri Bowie *et al.* have studied genetic samples from the various populations of Winifred's Warbler *Scepomycter winifredae* in the mountains of central Tanzania. The species was originally known solely from the Uluguru Mountains, but it has more recently been found in the Ukaguru and Rubeho ranges, with one record from the eastern scarp of the Udzungwas. The latter three populations lie >100 km from the Uluguru population with no contact as far as is known. They are also morphologically distinguishable, and their DNA is different at several localities, suggesting that these might be recognised specifically under the name Rubeho Warbler *Scepomycter rubehoensis*.

Source: Ibis *151, pp. 709–719*

How many species of *Pterodroma* occur in Macaronesia?

José Jesus *et al.* from the University of Madeira have been examining the taxonomy and relationships of the gadfly petrels *Pterodroma* spp. in Macaronesia using cytochrome *b*-gene data and morphometrics. Results suggest that all three forms: Zino's Petrel *P. madeira*, and the two forms of Fea's Petrel *P. f. feae* (from the Cape Verdes) and *P. f. deserta* (from Bugio) constitute a monophyletic clade most closely related to Bermuda Petrel *P. cahow* and Black-capped Petrel *P. hasitata*. The authors consider that all three Macaronesian forms warrant species status, which in turn has conservation implications as *P. f. deserta* might qualify as Vulnerable (see also *Bull. ABC* 16: 18).

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *19, pp. 199–214*

Dohrn's Thrush Babbler is a *Sylvia*

The taxonomic position of Dohrn's Thrush Babbler *Horizorhinus dohrni*, the sole representative of this genus endemic to the Gulf of Guinea

island of Príncipe, has remained uncertain since the species was formally described nearly 150 years ago. It has been variously placed in babblers (Timaliidae), flycatchers (Muscicapidae), thrushes (Turdidae) and warblers (Sylviidae). Molecular analysis by Gary Voelker, Martim Melo and Rauri Bowie resulted in strong support for the placement of *Horizorhinus* within babblers, and as part of the (babbler) genus *Sylvia*. Specifically, *Horizorhinus* was placed as sister to African Hill Babbler *Sylvia* (*Pseudoalcippe*) *abyssinica*, in a small *Sylvia* subclade that also included Blackcap *S. atricapilla* and Garden Warbler *S. borin*. The researchers therefore suggest that *Horizorhinus* be subsumed into *Sylvia*, and that Dohrn's Thrush Babbler henceforth be recognised as *Sylvia dohrni*.

Source: Ibis *151, pp. 580–583*

Genetic work reveals surprising new relative of the Fairy Flycatcher

Endemic to southern Africa, the Fairy Flycatcher (or Fairy Warbler) *Stenostira scita* has been variously placed close to the Monarchidae, within the Muscicapidae, as Incertae Sedis with other warblers, such as the tailorbirds *Orthotomus*, of uncertain relationships, or in the so-called Stenostiridae, which also comprises the genera *Elminia*, of the Afrotropics, and the Indo-Malayan *Culicicapa* (canary-flycatchers). The Stenostiridae is just one of seven lineages identified within the old

Fairy Flycatcher / Mignard enchanteur *Stenostira scita* (Peter Ryan)

Mount Moco website www.mountmoco.org

expanded view of the Muscicapidae by recent molecular work. Now, further genetic sequencing, by Jérôme Fuchs *et al.* suggests that the Asian taxon, Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*, also belongs within the Stenostiridae. Because of this, the authors of the study recommend that this fantail be returned to the genus *Chelidorhynx*. Given strong, independent and multi-local support for the definition of this family group, Fuchs and his co-workers have now formally erected the name Stenostiridae under the rules of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *53, pp. 384–393*

Internet resources

Mount Moco website

A new website, www.mountmoco.org, is devoted to ornithological work at Mount Moco, Angola's highest mountain and arguably the most important site for bird conservation in Angola. The mountain has no formal conservation status and the few remaining Afromontane forest patches, <85 ha in extent, are being eroded by a single community of *c.*300 people. The region is thought to support half of all Afromontane forest in Angola, making it vital for the protection of birds dependent on these forests, the most notable being Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*, with an estimated 80 pairs. No other viable population is currently known. The main aims are to have the site officially recognised as a conservation area and to reduce impacts on the forest by providing alternative sources of wood and increasing efficiency of natural resource use. Ultimately, it is hoped to start a small reforestation project and promote tourism to the site. A Portuguese version of the website should be available soon.

Source: Michael Mills & Martim Melo in litt. *October 2009*

Plumage variation in African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* and its separation from congenerics in equatorial Africa

Michel Louette[a]; illustrated by Nik Borrow[b]

Variation dans le plumage de l'Autour tachiro *Accipiter tachiro* et la distinction de ses congénères en Afrique équatoriale. Le plumage de l'Autour africain *Accipiter tachiro* présente une grande variation géographique et individuelle. Certains plumages liés à l'âge et au sexe, ainsi que d'autres caractéristiques, sont souvent mal décrits dans la littérature. L'auteur analyse les différences morphologiques caractéristiques et indique comment distinguer l'Autour africain d'autres espèces d'*Accipiter* en Afrique équatoriale, avec référence spéciale à l'Autour à flancs roux *A. castanilius*. Différents plumages adultes et immatures sont illustrés et comparés à ceux d'espèces similaires et sympatriques du genre *Accipiter*.

Summary. African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* displays remarkable geographical and individual variation; some of these plumages and other characteristics are often poorly described in the literature. Here I discuss the distinctive features and indicate how to separate African Goshawks from other *Accipiter* species in equatorial Africa, with special reference to Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*. Various adult and immature plumages are illustrated and compared with those of sympatric congenerics.

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* is one of the commonest raptors in African forests and woodlands. However, in the field as well as in the museum tray, the species can be easily confused with others of the same genus. Indeed, individual morphological variation is quite extensive, and the species also displays remarkable geographical variation, whilst some age- and sex-related plumages and other characteristics are often poorly described in the literature. Because the species' breeding season is prolonged in equatorial regions (yet seasonal elsewhere) and post-juvenile moult can take almost 12 months, moulting birds can be present virtually year-round here. These birds in post-juvenile moult are especially tricky to identify. Like all *Accipiter* species worldwide, size dimorphism is the rule, with the female being the larger of the sexes: in African Goshawk the wing-chord of females is up to *c.*15% longer than that of males in Cameroon and up to *c.*19% longer in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC; also Congo-Kinshasa). Weight differences are even more important: the female usually weighs almost twice as much as the male (Louette 2001, 2003). Although the forest forms are monomorphic in colour, with both sexes being colourful, Chapin (1932) already noted that in the woodland forms 'females have much less rufous on flanks and tibiae [than males] and often none at all'.

Taxonomy

The taxonomy of the genus *Accipiter* is not yet entirely clear. Robust results from molecular studies are best awaited in order to decide on the number of species in each of the three complexes (or 'superspecies')—Shikra *A. badius* (and relatives), African Little Sparrowhawk *A. minullus* (plus Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *A. erythropus*) and African Goshawk (which has several recognisable forms). Stresemann (1923) unified, purely on morphological grounds, all of the described taxa into a single species in each of these three cases. Then followed a long period of taxonomic stability and some recent works (Kemp & Kemp 1998, Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Allan 2005) still consider African Goshawk as a single species. Under any of the phylogenetic species concepts, which tend to afford species rank to all recognisable forms, other works prefer to split African Goshawk into two species: African Goshawk *A. tachiro sensu stricto* and 'Red-chested Goshawk' *A. toussenelii* (Kemp 1994, Clark & Davies 2000, Sinclair & Ryan 2003) and this will also be the case in a forthcoming field guide to African raptors (W. S. Clark pers. comm.). All recent works retain Shikra as one species but separate African Little Sparrowhawk from Red-thighed Sparrowhawk.

Helbig *et al.* (2002) proposed guidelines for assigning species rank, and, anticipating the

results of molecular work by ML's team of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), Tervuren, Belgium, it appears that it is still quite acceptable to provisionally apply the concept of 'superspecies' in the case of African Goshawk. There are behavioural arguments too, besides their morphological resemblance (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). However, hybridisation between the woodland form *tachiro* and the forest form *toussenelii* is not yet proven in the contact region in Kivu, DRC (Louette 2003; and preliminary molecular work at the RMCA), and the plumage of some aberrant individuals might be due to age or individual variation. I therefore prefer to employ the term paraspecies for *tachiro* on the one hand, and for *toussenelii* on the other (Louette 2003, 2007). Each paraspecies has four morphologically identifiable regional populations consequently treated here as subspecies.

In mainland equatorial regions, there is just one subspecies in the paraspecies *tachiro* (*sparsimfasciatus*, which occurs from Angola to Somalia), but three in the paraspecies *toussenelii* (from west to east: *macroscelides*, from Senegal to westernmost Cameroon; nominate *toussenelii*, from Cameroon to western DRC; and *canescens*, in central and eastern DRC) (see Fig. 1). The close relationship of all subspecies of African Goshawk is demonstrable when examining the endemic island forms. The subspecies *lopezi*, restricted to Bioko Island, in the Gulf of Guinea, is a member of the *toussenelii* paraspecies. It is well saturated with rufous below, especially on the breast, flanks and thighs and, in some, on the throat, the latter a feature unique to this population, although it is derived from *macroscelides* (Louette 2001). On the opposite side of Africa, subspecies *pembaensis*, a member of the *tachiro* paraspecies, is endemic to Pemba Island, off Tanzania. This bird is more deeply coloured than its founder population, *sparsimfasciatus* in mainland Tanzania and on Zanzibar (Louette 1995).

The isolated Ethiopian form *unduliventer*, which persists within 'ecological islands', is intermediate in coloration between the two paraspecies. According to the preliminary molecular results, it could either be included in the *tachiro* paraspecies or separated in its own, third, paraspecies.

Figure 1. Distribution of African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* subspecies.
Répartition des sous-espèces de l'Autour tachiro *Accipiter tachiro*.

Size and plumage variation in African Goshawk

There is a cline in size in equatorial Africa, from large East African to small West African birds: eastern DRC birds have a *c.*16% longer wing-chord than those from Liberia, but again, the mass difference is no doubt much greater, probably *c.*40% (Louette 2001, 2003). Thus, *macroscelides* in West Africa is the smallest subspecies, *toussenelii* is slightly larger and *canescens* is again somewhat larger, with *sparsimfasciatus* being the largest, sex for sex; in the field, however, this will barely be noticeable.

The pattern of spotting (in the juvenile) and barring (in the adult) of the breast feathers is variable among all subspecies (from heavily in most subspecies to an almost unspotted immature in *toussenelii* and *canescens* and an unbarred adult *canescens*). I have explained elsewhere (Louette 2000, 2007) that plumage characteristics are functionally related to habitat (e.g. with plumage colour intensity increasing with habitat density), age and possibly mimicry.

The adult female of the woodland *sparsimfasciatus* is cryptically coloured (probably related to nesting activities), with individual variation, possibly helpful for 'image avoidance' (so that potential prey does not learn the predator's colour pattern). Specimens from DRC can be separated into two general morphs (with buff and whitish bellies), but with a variable amount of ventral barring. (Here the term 'morph' is used, although Thomsett (2007) prefers to use 'phase' for a transitional plumage.) The adult male is even more variably coloured, which is in part age-related. A so-called 'sepia' morph—a misleading name—exists (Plate 2: 4); this may be a 'first adult' (subadult) plumage; it occurs in at least part of the range (southern and eastern DRC, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania). Nevertheless, some immatures, in their first (post-juvenile) moult, are definitely buff or white ventrally, just like adult females. These (subadult) plumages, lacking the reddish flanks, may help to avoid aggression from older, territorial males. But these morphs also exist in adults, with no remaining juvenile feathers. The 'standard' morph has not yet been found in subadults, and may therefore well be restricted to older birds. It has whitish underparts, finely barred and dark grey upperparts and reddish flanks, supposedly becoming darker with age; it could be more conspicuous than the buff and sepia morphs. This might assist in territorial defence or be preferred by females. On Plate 2, a wide variety of *sparsimfasciatus* plumages is illustrated. Notice the paler general colour of the 'sepia' morph compared to the 'standard' birds. The specimen used for this illustration is young. Its juvenile characteristics (the as yet unmoulted rufous-fringed uppertail-coverts, see Louette 2003) are invisible on the plate.

The adult evergreen forest *canescens* shows enforcement of colourful advertising plumage and loss of sexual plumage dimorphism—more pronounced colours may be useful for display in the shade of the equatorial forest. Here, the first adult plumage is heralded by the late moult of the barred juvenile flank-feathers in both sexes. Its juvenile is peculiar: it lacks (or has very few) breast spots, suggesting image avoidance, but possibly also character displacement (in order to help differentiate individuals from Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*) or mimicry (of adult Black Sparrowhawk *A. melanoleucus*).

A rare melanistic morph, in both adult and immature, is only known in East African *sparsimfasciatus.*

The 'normal' immature of *sparsimfasciatus* has two morphs: one with a whitish, the other with a buffish ground colour (respectively 22 and 17 specimens in the RMCA collection).

Common identification problems

1. Separating African Goshawk from Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk

In the rain forest zone, Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is the most likely candidate to be confused with the local brightly coloured African Goshawk of the *toussenelii* paraspecies. This is true for immatures as well as for adults and is mainly due to their similar size and superficially similar coloration, combined with poor descriptions and illustrations in some handbooks and field guides. Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is undoubtedly still one of Africa's least-known raptors. Louette (1992) provided a key for distinction in the hand, and Louette & Herroelen (2007) were the first to publish a photograph.

Unfortunately, several publications (among them Snow 1978) and some museum catalogues mention Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk in their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Legend to plate on opposite page

Plate 1. Adults of the forest taxa (with two woodland birds for comparison).

Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *Accipiter castanilius*

1–2 Adult female

3 Adult male

Illustrated are the extremes in variation in the amount of red intermingled with black in the breast barring (which exists in both sexes). The dark cast to the yellow legs and feet is probably a good field character for perched birds. Both sexes are very similar in coloration and mainly differ in size.

Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *A. erythropus*

4 Adult female *A. e. erythropus*

5 Adult male *A. e. zenkeri*

A small species with heavily contrasting plumage colours and especially conspicuous white throat and uppertail-coverts.

African Goshawk *A. tachiro*

6 Adult female *A. t. macroscelides*. Underparts are orange-chestnut barred whitish; the white throat is finely barred grey.

7 Adult male *A. t. toussenelii*. Note the very lightly barred, silvery grey throat.

8 Adult female *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. A typical individual.

9 Subadult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. This *c.*1-year-old individual is unusual as it has no rufous on its flanks.

10 Adult female *A. t. canescens*.

11 Adult female *A. t. canescens*. A less barred individual.

12 Adult male *A. t. canescens*.

Adult *A. t. canescens* is less heavily barred whitish below than *macroscelides* and most *toussenelii*, and also than Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk. Some *toussenelii* and *canescens*, especially in the south-west of the range, are almost plain rufous below, with a silvery cast. Adults of both sexes of the paraspecies *toussenelii* are very similar in coloration.

Planche 1. Adultes des taxons forestiers (accompagnés de deux oiseaux provenant de la savane arborée pour comparaison).

Autour à flancs roux *Accipiter castanilius*

1–2 Femelle adulte

3 Mâle adulte

Nous avons illustré les extrêmes dans la variation du rouge mêlé de noir dans les barres horizontales de la poitrine (présentes dans les deux sexes). Le saupoudrage noir des tarses et des pieds jaunes est probablement un bon critère d'identification sur le terrain pour les oiseaux perchés. Les deux sexes sont de coloration très similaire et diffèrent surtout en taille.

Epervier de Hartlaub *A. erythropus*

4 *A. e. erythropus* femelle adulte.

5 *A. e. zenkeri* mâle adulte.

Une petite espèce aux couleurs du plumage très contrastées, d'où ressortent la gorge et les sus-caudales blanches.

Autour tachiro *A. tachiro*

6 *A. t. macroscelides* femelle adulte. Les parties inférieures sont orange marron barrées de blanc ; la gorge blanche est finement barrée de gris.

7 *A. t. toussenelii* mâle adulte. Noter la gorge gris argenté et très légèrement barrée.

8 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* femelle adulte. Un individu caractéristique.

9 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* mâle subadulte. Ce spécimen d'environ un an est particulier par l'absence de coloration rousse sur les flancs.

10 *A. t. canescens* femelle adulte.

11 *A. t. canescens* femelle adulte. Un spécimen dont les barres sont moins évidentes.

12 *A. t. canescens* mâle adulte.

Les barres blanches sur les parties inférieures de *A. t. canescens* adulte sont moins apparentes que chez *macroscelides*, la plupart des *toussenelii*, ainsi que chez l'Autour à flancs roux. Certains *toussenelii* et *canescens*, et surtout ceux provenant du sud-ouest de leur aire de répartition, ont les parties inférieures quasi uniformément rousses et saupoudrées de gris argenté. Les adultes des deux sexes de la para-espèce *toussenelii* sont de coloration très similaire.

lists or among their holdings from West Africa, but my examination of specimens proves this to be incorrect in all cases. This species has also been erroneously mentioned from Ethiopia (BirdLife International 2009). Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is definitely known only from the equatorial forest belt from Nigeria to DRC, where it seems to be quite common. There are 101 specimens of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk in the collection of the RMCA, compared to 127 specimens of *toussenelii*—all collected randomly during colonial times—suggesting that both are about equally common in forested DRC, unless there is a behavioural difference, which would make one or the other more prone to be collected. The range of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk thus

Table 1. Identification features of adults of five *Accipiter* taxa from mainland equatorial regions: four subspecies of African Goshawk *A. tachiro* and Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*.

Tableau 1. Critères d'identification des adultes de cinq taxons de *Accipiter* de régions équatoriales continentales : quatre sous-espèces de l'Autour tachiro *A. tachiro* et l'Autour à flancs roux *A. castanilius*.

	Accipiter tachiro				*Accipiter*
	macroscelides	***toussenelii***	***canescens***	***sparsimfasciatus***	***castanilius***
Upperparts	slate-grey	grey	grey	male: variable; mostly dark grey; female: blackish brown	blackish
Throat	white, finely barred grey	plain silvery grey	white or grey	pale grey, finely streaked	white, finely streaked
Breast and belly	rufous barred greyish white	rufous barred whitish or grey	most: (almost) unbarred rufous; some: as *toussenelii*	whitish barred grey	dirty white with bold blackish-brown bars (sometimes with chestnut traces)
Flanks	rufous	rufous	rufous	barred greyish brown (male) or brown (female)	chestnut
Thighs	rufous	rufous	greyish white	barred greyish brown (male) or brown (female)	plain chestnut
Tail	blackish with three relatively large white spots			white spots present, less distinct or absent	blackish with 3–4 relatively large spots
Irides	usually yellow, occasionally orange				usually red
Legs and feet	bright yellow	bright yellow	bright yellow	bright yellow	bright yellow with black cast

Table 2. Identification features of immatures of five *Accipiter* taxa from mainland equatorial regions: four subspecies of African Goshawk *A. tachiro* and Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*.

Tableau 2. Critères d'identification des immatures de cinq taxons de *Accipiter* de régions équatoriales continentales : quatre sous-espèces de l'Autour tachiro *A. tachiro* et l'Autour à flancs roux *A. castanilius*.

	Accipiter tachiro				*Accipiter*
	macroscelides	***toussenelii***	***canescens***	***sparsimfasciatus***	***castanilius***
Upperparts	dark brown	blackish brown	blackish brown	brown	dark brown
Throat	dark brown mesialstripe	white	white	white with central streak	white with central streak
Breast	drop-like spots	few or no spots	few or no spots	drop-like spots	heavily spotted
Belly	drop-like spots	white	white	white	white with a variable amount of spots
Flanks	barred dark brown	broadly barred dark brown	variable; some heavily streaked	spotted	heavily streaked or barred
Thighs	barred dark brown	white	white	drop-like spots	barred with wider bars than toussenelii paraspecies
Legs and feet	yellow	yellow	yellow	yellow	yellow with black cast

partially overlaps with that of the three mainland forms of the *toussenelii* paraspecies.

Adult Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk has dark blackish upperparts and head-sides; in the sympatric African Goshawks these are paler slate-grey (in *macroscelides*) or grey (in *toussenelii* / *canescens*). Ventrally, the flanks of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk are also darker (chestnut vs. orange or rufous in the *toussenelii* paraspecies) and the breast and belly are dirty white with bold, dark blackish-brown bars, sometimes with chestnut traces; in African Goshawk these parts are rufous barred whitish or grey (in *toussenelii* and some *canescens*) or (almost) unbarred rufous (in most *canescens*) or whitish barred grey (in *sparsimfasciatus*). The thighs are plain chestnut

Legend to plate on p. 26

Plate 2. Variation in adult African Goshawk woodland taxon and flight patterns of different species

1–2 Adult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* in flight. The variation in the amount of reddish on the flanks and the underwing in *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* is quite extensive. In adults the heavy colour saturation overall is more often than not correlated to an almost unpatterned underwing. However, underwing pattern is quite variable, as shown here.

3 Adult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. A particularly dark specimen from south Sudan.

4 Apparently subadult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* in the sepia morph.

5 Adult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. Another variant with more rufous colour in the barring, possibly an old individual.

6 Adult male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. A normal, dark male with typically barred underparts and rather pronounced rufous flanks.

7 Adult female *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. Some birds from Kivu, eastern DRC, and especially those from Idjwi Island in Lake Kivu, like this female, have a yellowish or even chocolate wash to the underparts.

8 Adult female *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. A bird with heavily barred underparts and reddish flanks which was suspected to be a hybrid *canescens* / *sparsimfasciatus* (see Louette 2003).

9 Adult Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *A. erythropus* in flight. Red-thighed Sparrowhawk is, with African Little Sparrowhawk *A. minullus*, unique amongst the African *Accipiter* in having a white band on the uppertail-coverts.

10 Adult Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius* in flight. The tail spots are small but quite apparent.

11 Adult *A. t. macroscelides* in flight. Tail spots are variable and may be absent.

12 Adult *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* in flight. Tail spots are variable and may be absent.

Planche 2. La variation chez l'Autour tachiro *Accipiter tachiro* adulte du taxon de la savane arborée et patterns en vol de différentes espèces

1–2 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* mâle adulte en vol. La variation dans l'intensité de la coloration rousse sur les flancs et le dessous de l'aile chez *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* est considérable. Chez l'adulte une coloration intense sur l'ensemble du corps est souvent corrélée à un dessous d'aile sans dessin caractéristique. Cependant, le dessin du dessous de l'aile est fort variable, comme montré ici.

3 Mâle adulte *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*. Un spécimen particulièrement foncé provenant du sud du Soudan.

4 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* probablement mâle subadulte de la forme sépia.

5 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* mâle adulte. Une autre variante, avec plus de coloration rousse dans les barres, peut-être un individu âgé.

6 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* mâle adulte. Un mâle foncé caractéristique, présentant les barres typiques dessous et une coloration rousse prononcée sur les flancs.

7 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* femelle adulte. Quelques oiseaux du Kivu, de l'est de la RD Congo, et notamment ceux de l'île Idjwi sur le lac Kivu, comme cette femelle, ont les parties inférieures lavées de jaune ou même de brun chocolat.

8 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* femelle adulte. Un oiseau au dessous fortement barré et aux flancs roux qui fut suspecté d'être un hybride *canescens* / *sparsimfasciatus* (voir Louette 2003).

9 Epervier de Hartlaub *A. erythropus* adulte en vol. L'Epervier de Hartlaub (ainsi que l'Epervier minule) est unique parmi les *Accipiter* africains par la bande blanche sur les sus-caudales.

10 Autour à flancs roux *A. castanilius* adulte en vol. Les taches sur la queue sont petites mais bien apparentes.

11 *A. t. macroscelides* adulte en vol. Les taches sur la queue sont variables et peuvent être absentes.

12 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* adulte en vol. Les taches sur la queue sont variables et peuvent être absentes.

in Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk; they are quite variable in the African Goshawk: rufous barred white or greyish, rufous mixed with white or grey, plain grey or white barred grey. In the southern part of the range of *toussenelii*, there is a silvery grey barring or cast over the orange-rufous ground colour of the ventral side and the thighs. The throat is white with some faint, narrow grey bars in Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk, whereas it is plain silvery grey in *toussenelii* and white in *canescens*; in the mainly allopatric *macroscelides*, however, the white throat is also finely barred. The two species have white spots on the upper tail (Plate 2: 10–11).

Adult female Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is not noticeably smaller than male African Goshawk in the area of overlap, but the black breast barring, bright chestnut flanks and deeply coloured chestnut thighs distinguish it from its congener (Plate 1: 1–2).

Immature African Goshawks are quite variable according to subspecies and region: *toussenelii* and especially *canescens* are only sparingly spotted ventrally, some even without spots; in *macroscelides*

Legend to plate is on p. 25

Legend to plate is on p. 28

Legend to plate on p. 27

Plate 3. Immatures (with adult Black Sparrowhawk *A. melanoleucus*)

1 Immature male *A. t. macroscelides*. Resembles immature Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk (2); they are, however, sympatric only in southern Nigeria and westernmost Cameroon.

2 Immature female *A. castanilius*. Note the browner upperparts than *A. t. macroscelides*, more richly coloured barring on the flanks and thighs, the different shape to the 'tear-drop' breast markings, and more mottling on the nape and back.

3 Immature female *A. e. erythropus*. Upperparts darker than in any race of *tachiro*.

4 Immature female *A. e. zenkeri*. The underparts pattern is quite distinctive: buffy-white with uniquely spotted breast-sides and dark-barred flanks slightly washed rusty.

5 Adult male *A. melanoleucus*. Note black patches on flanks and thighs.

6 Immature male *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* (buff morph). Generally a brownish bird, with much less contrasting plumage than immatures of the *toussenelii* paraspecies.

7 Immature female *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* (white morph). Somewhat more contrasting than 6.

8 Immature female *A. t. canescens*. May look superficially similar to 5, but has many fewer or no black markings on flanks and plain white thighs.

9 Immature male *A. t. canescens*. As 8, but distinctly smaller.

10 Immature male *A. t. toussenelii*. May look superficially similar to 5, but has many fewer black markings on flanks and thighs. Some specimens of this subspecies have slightly more brown markings on the underparts.

Planche 3. Immatures (avec l'adulte de l'Autour noir *A. melanoleucus*)

1 *A. t. macroscelides* mâle immature. Ressemble à l'immature de l'Autour à flancs roux (2) ; ils ne sont toutefois sympatriques qu'au sud du Nigeria et dans l'extrême ouest du Cameroun.

2 Autour à flancs roux *A. castanilius* femelle immature. Noter les parties supérieures plus brunes que chez *macroscelides*, les barres sur les flancs et les cuisses plus richement colorées, les formes différentes des marques sur la poitrine, et le dos et la nuque plus marbrés.

3 Epervier de Hartlaub *A. e. erythropus* femelle immature. Les parties supérieures sont plus foncées que chez n'importe quelle sous-espèce de *tachiro*.

4 Epervier de Hartlaub *A. e. zenkeri* femelle immature. Le pattern des parties inférieures est assez caractéristique : blanc chamois avec les côtés de la poitrine tachetés et les flancs avec des barres sombres légèrement lavées de roux.

5 Autour noir *A. melanoleucus* mâle adulte. Noter les taches noires sur les flancs et les cuisses.

6 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* mâle immature (forme chamois). En général un oiseau brunâtre, avec un plumage beaucoup moins contrasté que les immatures de la para-espèce *toussenelii*.

7 *A. t. sparsimfasciatus* femelle immature (forme blanche). Quelque peu plus contrastée que 6.

8 *A. t. canescens* femelle immature. Peut sembler superficiellement similaire à 5, mais possède beaucoup moins ou quasi pas de marques noires sur les flancs. De plus, les cuisses sont uniformément blanches.

9 *A. t. canescens* mâle immature. Comme 8, mais nettement plus petit.

10 *A. t. toussenelii* mâle immature. Peut paraître superficiellement similaire à 5, mais possède beaucoup moins ou quasi pas de marques noires sur les flancs et les cuisses. Certains spécimens de cette sous-espèce présentent légèrement plus de marques brunes sur les parties inférieures.

the spotting is well marked (Plate 3: 1, 8–10). Nevertheless, the sympatric subspecies can be difficult to separate from immature Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk, which however always has heavy ventral spotting. Immature Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk also has darker brown upperparts (especially after the rufous juvenile feather tips have worn off) and the brown bars on the thighs are equally both darker and wider than in the paraspecies *toussenelii*. Within the range of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk the confusion forms would be *macroscelides* in south-east Nigeria / south-west Cameroon or a small juvenile male *sparsimfasciatus* (as illustrated on Plate 3). Immature / juvenile *toussenelii* and *canescens* are easier to separate, as they have a plainer white breast with fewer or no drop-shaped markings. Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk's tail has fewer and smaller white spots than sympatric African Goshawk. If seen well the darker legs and feet of the former should be distinctive in both adults and immatures.

Photographs suggest some differences in the amount of naked skin around the eye, the cere,

bill, legs and feet colours, and the head shape. Adult Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk may have the brighter yellow cere and facial skin of the two, but this could be due to temporal, individual or even sexual variation. There is a photograph taken at the nest in Kenya of a male *sparsimfasciatus* showing a restricted amount of naked skin around the eye (van Someren 1956), whereas this seems quite extensive in the female. Legs and feet are yellow in both species, but in Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk it seems as if a black cast has been put over the yellow ground colour. The head of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is proportionately wider (Louette & Herroelen 2007; Plate 1: 1).

An *Accipiter* photographed by M. Wilson, at Bwindi, Uganda (Figs. 2–3), provoked a discussion. Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is not yet known for Uganda, but its occurrence in this border area with DRC is plausible. Obviously, it is in adult plumage. However, the bird does not show the decidedly black dorsal plumage colour, or the dark cast to the yellow legs and feet, which are so obvious in Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk. Other features of the Bwindi bird are the barred flanks and thighs; these are plain chestnut in Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk but barred in *sparsimfasciatus*, the subspecies of African Goshawk in this area. Additionally, the white tail spots are indistinct; the bars on the vent are single-coloured reddish and lack the black component typical of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk. A female *sparsimfasciatus* is large and much paler than the bird in the photograph, and the relative length of the tail and the size of the person's hand both indicate that the bird's size was approximately correct for a male. The bars on the breast are bicoloured, which is not the rule for a male, but not impossible.

2. Separating African Goshawk from larger *Accipiter* species

The peculiar immature female of African Goshawk in west-central Africa, between Cameroon and DRC (*canescens* and *toussenelii*), which sometimes lacks ventral spots, could be confused with adult male Black Sparrowhawk (Plate 3: 5 and 8). Superficially, the latter differs only in that it has more extensive black patches on the flanks and even more on the thighs (it also has the typical adult red irides, whereas the immature female African Goshawk still has brown or pale yellow eyes).

3. Separating African Goshawk from smaller *Accipiter* species

When size is difficult to appreciate in the field, confusion of the small *toussenelii* males is also possible with the generally smaller Red-thighed Sparrowhawk; in fact, the largest females of Red-thighed Sparrowhawk attain just about the same size as the smallest males of Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk (Plate 1: 3–4). Adults of these two species have decidedly blackish upperparts (grey in *toussenelii*) and red eyes (orange or yellow in *toussenelii*). Male Red-thighed Sparrowhawk is noticeably smaller. Just as in African Goshawk, the western nominate subspecies of Red-thighed Sparrowhawk is smaller than the eastern subspecies *A. e. zenkeri*, but to a lesser extent (*c.*5% difference in wing-chord: Louette 2002), and it is usually less saturated with rufous on the ventral side than the eastern one (see Borrow & Demey 2001). The ventral colour of female *A. e. zenkeri* is usually, but not always, overlain with silvery grey, as is the case with most *toussenelii*.

In woodland, where an appreciable size difference separates male *sparsimfasciatus* from female African Little Sparrowhawk, confusion is less likely, although the identification of a lone bird can prove difficult, even from a photograph, see e.g. www.birdquest.net/afbid/birdspecies.php?func=view&slideno=3&af_bs_id=276.

4. Separating African Goshawk from other similar raptors

Shikra is also a common woodland *Accipiter*; its iris is orange to red in the adult and its central pair of tail-feathers is plain (compared to other species discussed here, on Plate 2). Immature Shikra has a dark mesial throat stripe and contrasting blotches on the breast, which are lacking, indistinct or narrow in African Goshawk.

It is less likely that African Goshawk will be confused with Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *A. rufiventris* or Ovambo Sparrowhawk *A. ovampensis*; these species exhibit several features that distinguish them from the former and are well depicted in several handbooks (although a photograph of Ovambo Sparrowhawk is misidentified as *A. tachiro* in del Hoyo *et al.* 1994: 79). Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus* has

Figures 2–3. African Goshawk / Autour tachiro *Accipiter tachiro sparsimfasciatus*, Bwindi, Uganda, 26 October 2000 (M. Wilson)

a much longer, graduated tail with a conspicuous white bar at its base. Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* has, among other differences, prominent white uppertail-coverts, even when immature.

Key features to check

1. Iris and cere colour. This is often a useful character for species recognition. The iris is red in most adult Chestnut-flanked and Red-thighed Sparrowhawks, but mostly yellow (occasionally orange) in African Goshawk. The cere is bright orangey-yellow in most Chestnut-flanked and Red-thighed Sparrowhawks but rarely so bright in the *toussenelii* paraspecies of African Goshawk. In *sparsimfasciatus* it is yellow or (more often) greenish-yellow (Chapin 1932, Zimmerman *et al.* 1996; specimens in RMCA); in southern Africa (nominate *tachiro*) it is grey or greenish-grey (Allan 2005, Kemp & Kemp 1998).

2. Leg and foot colour. Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk is peculiar among African *Accipiter* in having a blackish cast overlaying the yellow ground colour. All RMCA specimens show this feature, and this must be visible in live birds too. All adult African Goshawks have bright yellow legs and feet (although dark legs appear also on a *macroscelides* specimen from The Gambia, photographed by C. Barlow after it was kept in a fridge for ten years).

3. Tail spots in adults. *A. t. toussenelii*, *canescens* and *macroscelides* have three relatively large white spots on the uppertail. While these spots are largest in the *toussenelii* paraspecies, they also occur in some individuals of the *tachiro* paraspecies: in *sparsimfasciatus* some males have them, but others do not and some females also have spots, although these are less distinct. (In southern Africa's nominate *tachiro* only the male has uppertail spots: Allan 1997).

Conclusion

It is important to realise that in such a variable species as the African Goshawk, many characteristics should be taken into account before a definite identification can be made in those areas where it occurs alongside other *Accipiter* species. Whilst it cannot be excluded that individuals occasionally occur outside their normal range, this must be rare, because African Goshawks are sedentary. Therefore, the locality is an important clue to the taxon concerned and possible confusion species.

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Status of Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in south-eastern Botswana

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Le statut de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana* au sud-est du Botswana. La grande majorité de la population de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana*, une espèce endémique à l'Afrique australe, se trouve au sud-est du Botswana. Des recensements par transect ont été effectués en novembre 2007–janvier 2008 afin d'établir son statut dans cette région et de comparer les résultats avec ceux d'un recensement effectué en 1992–93. En janvier 2008 des observations ont également été faites pour établir les limites de son aire de répartition. Les résultats indiquent une modeste augmentation des effectifs et une légère diminution de la superficie d'habitat approprié, tandis que l'aire de répartition a peu changé. On n'a pas trouvé de corrélation entre les changements de la superficie de l'habitat approprié et les changements des effectifs, ce qui indique qu'à présent il y a suffisamment d'habitat qui convient. Au sud-est du Botswana, l'Alouette à ongles courts est presque entièrement confinée à des terrains en jachère où la cultivation est avec des méthodes agricoles traditionnelles. Les dernières années on a enregistré une diminution substantielle de la surface plantée avec du sorgho et du maïs selon des méthodes traditionnelles. Si cette tendance continue, cela pourrait avoir un effet défavorable sur l'Alouette à ongles courts. L'espèce bénéficierait probablement beaucoup de l'instauration d'une prime gouvernementale pour stimuler l'utilisation de méthodes agricoles traditionnelles.

Summary. The large majority of the population of Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana*, a southern African endemic, is found in south-eastern Botswana. A series of transect surveys was undertaken in November 2007–January 2008 in order to establish its status in this region and to compare the results with those obtained during a 1992–93 survey. In January 2008 observations were made to establish the limits of its range. Results suggest a modest increase in numbers and a small decline in the area of suitable habitat, whilst there has been little change to the range. No correlation between changes to the area of suitable habitat and changes in numbers was found, indicating that currently there is no shortage of suitable habitat. In south-east Botswana, Short-clawed Lark is almost completely confined to fallow land that has been cultivated for field crops using traditional agricultural practices. In recent years there has been a large decrease in the area of land cultivated with sorghum and maize using traditional practices. If this trend continues, this could have an adverse impact on Short-clawed Lark. The most beneficial support for the species is probably a government incentive to farmers to cultivate field crops using traditional practices.

Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* (Fig. 1) is endemic to southern Africa. There are two discrete populations: a large one in south-eastern Botswana and the North West Province of South Africa, extending marginally into the Northern Cape and Free State Provinces, and a smaller, isolated, population largely restricted to the Pietersburg Plateau in Limpopo Province, South Africa. A survey conducted in the 2004–05 breeding season in the North West, Northern Cape and Free State Provinces indicated an apparent range reduction and possible decrease of Short-clawed Lark in South Africa (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2007). This prompted CAB and KM to undertake a survey in south-eastern Botswana in November 2007–January 2008, in order to establish the species' current status in the country and make a comparison with an earlier, unpublished survey undertaken by MH in November–December 1992 and November–December 1993.

Short-clawed Lark is found territorially in pairs for most of the year (Herremans & Herremans 1992). Only the male sings the territorial song (Herremans & Herremans 1992). The male usually sings from a bush, fence-post or small tree up to *c.*4 m tall, occasionally from a clod of earth in a ploughed field. In south-east Botswana the intensity of its song increases dramatically from October to December (Herremans & Herremans 1992). There is a spectacular aerial display, which reaches its peak in October–November. Territorial activity is much reduced in the latter part of the rainy season, when birds are moulting, and in the dry season (Herremans & Herremans

1992). In a study of the eastern population in the Polokwane Game Reserve on the Pietersburg Plateau, Engelbrecht (2005) found that territorial activity commenced in early August, reached its peak towards mid and late September, then continued at a low frequency throughout the summer before reaching a second peak at the end of the breeding season in March–April.

Farmers are often familiar with the species and call it *sebota*, the Setswana word for lark. Possibly because it is accustomed to the presence of farmers it is a confiding species, showing little fear of people. The first indication of its presence is often of a male singing, just a few metres away. It appears to have the tendency to move towards an intruder, such as a person or vehicle, venturing into its territory and then announce its presence by singing at close range. Occasionally it follows the intruder at close quarters, right through its territory until the intruder has left. Due to its confiding nature and its obtrusive habits, the male is often easy to observe, particularly in early summer.

Study area

Location

The study area was located in the core range of Short-clawed Lark in south-eastern Botswana. This is an area of *c.*16,000 km^2 extending west to *c.*24°59'E, north to *c.*24°00'S and east to *c.*26°30'E. The international boundary with South Africa represents the southern limit. There are also a few records outside of this core range, particularly north of 24°00'S (Herremans 1997).

Climate

The climate is characterised by long hot summers, with summer rainfall, and short, cool, dry winters. Annual rainfall around Gaborone averages 450–500 mm, with most rain falling in October–April (Campbell & Main 2003). Rainfall varies greatly from year to year. Annual rainfall data at Gaborone since 1980 indicate that the summers with the lowest rainfall were 1984–85, with 243 mm, 1991–92, with 244 mm, and 2006–07 with only 145 mm (Department of Meteorolgical Services, Gaborone, *in litt.* 2008). For the same period the summer with the highest annual rainfall was 1999–2000, with 886 mm; 2007–08 was also particularly wet, with 713 mm. The study period was thus preceded by a particularly dry summer.

Habitat

The natural vegetation of south-east Botswana is predominantly *Acacia* savanna, though habitat dominated by broad-leaved tree species is also widespread, particularly on sandy soils and rocky hills. Short-clawed Lark occurs primarily in areas with *Acacia* savanna. Its distribution is centred on luvisols and lixisols on granite substrate. The species is generally absent from rocky ground and, accordingly, avoids rocky hills (Herremans 1997). Rocky hills occupy extensive areas in south-east Botswana, particularly between Mochudi and Molepolole and also to the south-west of Gaborone, and around Kanye and Lobatse. The species avoids Kalahari sands, which are most prevalent in the west of the study area, at the eastern edge of the Kalahari and also avoids vertisols, though such soils are localised and mainly confined to the area between Tlokweng and Sikwane (Ministry of Agriculture 1990).

Most land in south-east Botswana is tribal leasehold land. There is, however, an extensive block of freehold farms around Lobatse, and immediately north and south of Gaborone is also private land. The city of Gaborone is situated on former freehold farming land. Short-clawed Lark is almost totally confined to areas of tribal land that have been cultivated using traditional dry-land farming practices (Herremans 1997, 2005). Such traditional practices involve the dry-land planting of field crops, mainly sorghum and maize, and the grazing of fields, after crops have been harvested, by livestock, primarily cattle, donkeys and goats. Short-clawed Lark prefers fallow fields, grazed by livestock, with scattered bushes and small trees, primarily *Acacia tortilis*, though occasionally *A. mellifera* and *Dichrostachys cinerea* (Fig. 2). It has a preference for open habitat. Large open fields devoid of bushes or small trees, characteristic of commercial farms, are also unsuitable. However, the great majority of arable land in south-east Botswana is cultivated using traditional practices. According to data for 2002, 42.8% of the 16,000 km^2 core range of Short-clawed Lark is considered to be land either cultivated, or previously cultivated, for crops using dry-land farming practices (Department of Surveys and Mapping, Gaborone, *in litt.* 2008). However, this figure is likely to include some land subsequently encroached by *Acacia* and no longer suitable for Short-clawed Larks.

Figure 1. Short-clawed Lark / Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana*, Ntlhantlhe, south-eastern Botswana, August 2008 (Eugenie Skelton)

Methods

Both in 1992–93 and in 2007 a series of transect surveys was undertaken along a representative selection of routes in order to estimate the number of territories of Short-clawed Larks and to assess the area of habitat suitable for the species. The same methods were used for both sets of surveys so the results are directly comparable. Most transects were undertaken along gazetted roads but a few went along un-gazetted tracks. All transects had a width of 400 m—200 m on either side of the road or track. Hence for every 1 km of road or track, 40 ha were surveyed.

A Short-clawed Lark was usually first located when a singing bird was heard, although occasionally one was first located by the sound of its alarm or contact call. Only very seldom was a bird initially located by sight. The presence of a singing bird or of a bird in display flight was considered to be evidence of a territorial pair. Habitat was considered to be suitable for Short-clawed Larks if it was open land or fallow land with or without scattered trees or bushes, and unsuitable if it was thick, closed bush, woodland, habitation or had a rocky substrate. Occasionally birds were found in unsuitable habitat, such as closed bush or the vicinity of habitation, but always there was suitable habitat nearby, within 100 m from the bird. Fallow land that had been largely encroached by *Acacia* was considered to be no longer suitable. For each transect habitat was recorded at 100-m intervals for the entire transect, so that the area of habitat and proportion of the land suitable for Short-clawed Lark could be calculated. Habitat was recorded separately on each side of the road, as quite often there was suitable habitat only on one side of the road. Along each transect, on both sides of the road, the start and finish of suitable habitat, to the nearest 100 m, was recorded.

All transects were undertaken by vehicle. Wherever habitat was considered to be suitable, the vehicle was driven slowly and stopped at 100-m intervals to listen for Short-clawed Larks within 200 m of the road or track. If, following a wait of five minutes, no Short-clawed Larks were recorded, a tape-recording of the song (recorded by MH in 1992–93) was played, using the sound system of the vehicle. For all singing birds, the perpendicular distance of the bird to the road and coordinates of the point on the road closest to the bird, were recorded. Coordinates were recorded

Figure 2. Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* habitat, Ntlhantlhe, south-eastern Botswana, August 2008 (Eugenie Skelton)

Habitat de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana*, Ntlhantlhe, Botswana du sud-est, août 2008 (Eugenie Skelton)

correct to the nearest hundredth of a minute, using a Garmin GPS, model MAP60Cx. If birds were recorded at successive stops, 100 m apart, then an effort was made to hear all birds recorded at both stops at the same time, to avoid recording the same bird or birds twice. When they could not be heard at the same time they were not recorded as birds had the tendency to follow the vehicle while it remained in their territories.

Most field work was undertaken in the morning, starting as early as possible after sunrise (05.30 hrs); it was seldom continued after 14.00 hrs. Territorial males are most vocal early in the morning, and till *c.*10.00 hrs it was generally possible to locate them without playing the tape-recording. From *c.*10.00 hrs to *c.*14.00 hrs males were less vocal, although they would often still sing. To locate males at this time it was often necessary to play the tape recordings of the song and wait for a response; these tape recordings included both dialects. After *c.*14.00 hrs territorial males became much more difficult to locate, even using playback. Evidence of this was obtained for the transect survey undertaken along the Kanye–Mmathethe road. When this transect was surveyed in the mid-afternoon, no birds were recorded despite the habitat being suitable, but when the transect was re-surveyed in the early morning, two weeks later, seven pairs were located.

The efficiency with which birds were located was probably also influenced by the weather conditions. It was generally easier to locate birds on windless days than on windy days. It was also easier to locate birds on cool days, following a period of rain rather than during hot and/or dry periods. Fortunately, during the 2007 surveys the weather was relatively cool and cloudy with well above average rainfall, with nearly all transects being undertaken in favourable conditions.

In 1992–93 a total of 1,350 km were surveyed. To allow direct comparison, the large majority of transects in 2007 were exactly the same as in 1992–93. However, transects in which no Short-clawed Larks were recorded in 1992–93, such as from Mochudi and from Sikwane to Olifants Drift, were not repeated in 2007 (see Appendix 1 for all place names mentioned). Transects on which Short-clawed Larks were recorded only at low density in 1992–93, were not deemed to be a priority, so the majority of such transects were not surveyed again in 2007. Un-gazetted tracks in rural Botswana tend to vary their route over time, due to allocation of fields and plots, fallen trees and erosion. Attempts to follow the exact routes of three transect surveys, from Oodi to Mochudi, from Mogoditshane to the eastern corner of the international airport and from Makgomane to Tswaaneng, which were undertaken on un-gazetted tracks in 1992–93, were unsuccessful as the exact route followed could not be re-located. Accordingly the data for these three transects are not directly comparable (although they are certainly in the same area). One transect, from Pitsane via Tlharaseleele to Rakhuna, adjacent to the area where Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007) searched unsuccessfully for Short-clawed Larks in South Africa, was surveyed in 2007, though it had not been surveyed in 1992–93. In January 2008 S. & L. Tyler, using the same methods, surveyed an additional transect from Botlhapatlou via Hatslatladi to Lentsweletau that was also not surveyed in 1992–93; the results of this transect are included in the data. In 2007–08 transects surveyed had a total length of 990 km, which represents *c.*2.5% of the core range of Short-clawed Lark; 841 km of these are directly comparable with data for 1992–93.

In January 2008, an effort was made, with the assistance of S. & L. Tyler, to visit areas at the edge of the range that had not been covered in transect surveys, in order to establish the range limits. Locations where the species occurred 15 years previously were revisited to ascertain if there had been any range changes.

Results

Survey efficiency

The estimated perpendicular distances of territorial birds from the road or track (the centre of the transect) are grouped into 10-m class intervals and are presented in Fig. 3.

The estimated perpendicular distances show a bias to more 'convenient' distances from the road, particularly for greater distances. Class intervals, such as $100 \leq d < 110$, $150 \leq d < 160$ and $200 \leq d < 210$ (d = perpendicular distance, in metres, from road) are represented in the data more frequently than other class intervals, because of rounding-off of estimates.

The data clearly indicate that a greater proportion of territorial birds were recorded closer to the road than further away. Indeed, 77% of territorial birds were recorded at <110 m from the roads, while only 23% were found in the peripheral 48% of the transects.

It is reasonable to assume that the data do not include all the territorial males present within the transects. To estimate the proportion of birds present that were detected in a survey is not straightforward. Assuming the drop-off in numbers recorded with distance (Fig. 3) represents the probability of being detected as a function of distance, we can fit a polynomial curve and estimate the efficiency of the surveys. Accepting the curve as a probability density function, it can be estimated that only 46% of the birds present were actually recorded during the surveys (though see also Discussion).

Numbers and population density

The 30 transects that were surveyed both in 1992–93 and in 2007, for which the results are directly comparable, are listed in Table 1.

For comparable transects a total of 396 pairs were recorded in 1992–93 and 447 in 2007, representing a 12.9% increase. While the results suggest that the numbers of pairs increased between the two surveys, the area of habitat considered suitable for Short-clawed Larks decreased slightly, from 11,410 to 10,810 ha, i.e., for comparable transects, a 5.3% reduction. Accordingly, there was also an increase in density in suitable habitat, from 3.57 pairs / 100 ha in 1992–93 to 4.14 pairs / 100 ha in 2007, an increase of 19.2%.

Short-clawed Lark is clearly more common in some parts of its range than in other areas. In

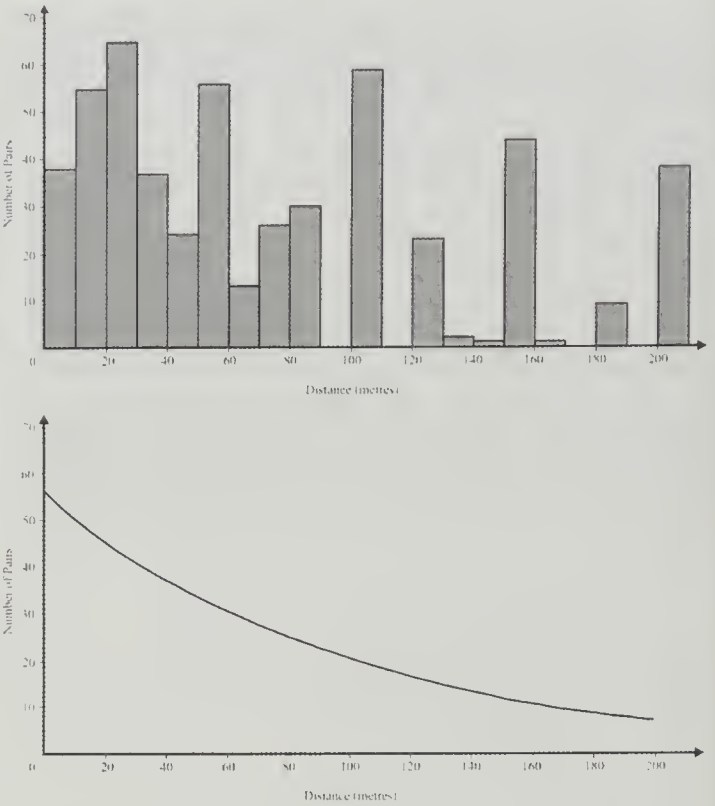

Figure 3. Perpendicular distance of pairs of Short-clawed Larks *Certhilauda chuana* from line of transect.

Distance perpendiculaire des couples de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana* par rapport au transect.

2007 the highest densities were around Mosopa, Kubung and Thamaga; >10 pairs / 100 ha of suitable habitat were recorded for several transects in this area. Relatively high densities of >6 pairs / 100 ha of suitable habitat were also found around Ntlantlhe and north of Gaborone. Densities in the southern part of the range, south of the Lobatse–Kanye main road, were noticeably lower: south of 25°10'S densities for all transects were < 4 pairs / 100 ha of suitable habitat. The pattern of densities is illustrated in a 15-minute grid (Fig. 4).

For most transects more pairs were recorded in 2007 than in 1992–93. Those for which fewer were recorded are Bokaa–Kopong (from 12 pairs to nine pairs), Lentsweletau–Kopong (ten pairs to five pairs), Letlhakeng–Gasese (24 pairs to three pairs), Mmangodi–Moshupa (26 pairs to 22 pairs), Boatle–Mmankgodi (11 pairs to eight pairs), Mmathethe–Metlojane (11 pairs to two pairs), Good Hope–Mmathethe (nine pairs to six pairs) and Metlojane–Good Hope (two pairs to one pair). For the Mmankgodi–Mosopa transect, the reduction in numbers was due to a large decrease in pairs recorded around Mmankgodi, whereas near Mosopa a small increase was actually recorded.

Table 1. Summary of results of transect surveys (from north to south)
Tableau 1. Aperçu des résultats des recensements par transect (du nord au sud)

TRANSECT	Total ha	% suitable habitat		Pairs		Density, pairs/100 ha in suitable habitat	
		2007	1992–93	2007	1992–93	2007	1992–93
Molepolole—N of Hatsalatladi	2,180	34.4	25.7	19	13	2.54	2.32
Molepolole—Lentsweletau	1,400	22.8	23.6	5	3	1.57	0.91
Lentsweletau—Rasesa—Pilane	1,334	19.7	12.9	4	1	1.52	0.58
Lentsweletau—Kopong	1,020	9	15.4	5	10	5.42	6.37
Bokaa—Kopong	572	34.8	38.5	9	12	4.52	5.45
Mabalane—Mochudi	1,682	7.3	14.2	2	1	1.62	0.42
Mmamashia turn-off—Modipane—Mabalane	1,664	20.8	16.9	9	2	2.6	0.71
Letlhakeng—Gasese	1,994	19.8	29.6	3	24	0.76	4.06
Gasese—Pitseng	844	41	52.3	16	11	4.62	2.49
Molepolole—Thamaga	1,398	27.7	20.8	18	10	4.65	3.44
Thamaga—west along power-line	1,360	15.9	36	23	14	10.63	2.86
Kubung—north to power-line—N of Losilokgokong	924	20.5	24.5	25	19	13.17	8.4
Mosopa—Kubung	644	25.2	20.9	19	6	11.72	4.46
Mosopa—edge of sandveld (Ralekgetho road)	792	31.1	27.5	17	15	6.9	6.89
Mosopa—Thamaga	624	21.1	51.3	14	11	10.66	3.44
Mmankgodi—Mosopa	948	24.3	36.3	22	26	9.58	7.55
Boatle (Ramotswa turn-off)—Mogonye—Mmankgodi	1,060	18.8	28.2	8	11	4.01	3.68
Mogobane turn-off—Borotsi—Ntlhantlhe—Ranaka	1,396	38.8	36.1	40	37	7.38	7.34
Ranaka—south through fields—Ntlhantlhe	778	62.8	47.4	43	41	8.8	11.13
Ntlhantlhe—Gamoswane (Kanye—Lobatse road)	858	57.8	62.6	38	36	7.67	6.71
8 km along Mmathethe—Kanye road	326	79.1	70.2	7	5	2.71	2.18
Pelotshetlha turn-off—Dipotsana	748	52.8	75.5	10	8	2.6	1.42
Lobatse road turn-off—Mmathethe	1,548	55.7	56.8	17	16	2.07	1.82
Mmathethe—Metlojane	1,084	28.1	21.3	2	11	0.66	4.77
Mmathethe—Good Hope	1,100	39.4	30.6	6	9	1.38	2.67
Mmathethe—Metlobo	1,470	43.2	45.3	14	10	2.21	1.5
Good Hope—Lorwana	944	57	75	18	17	3.34	2.4
Metlojane—Good Hope	372	60.1	43.5	1	2	0.45	1.24
Metlojane—Makgomane	630	79.2	60.9	15	7	3.01	1.83
Borobodilepe—Hebron—Phitsane Molopo	1,946	28.2	27.2	18	8	3.27	1.51
TOTAL OF 30 TRANSECTS SURVEYED IN BOTH 1992–93 AND 2007	33,640	32.1	33.9	447	396	4.14	3.47
Oodi—Mochudi	1,282	14.1		11		6.08	
Oodi—Mochudi	1,580		18.9		3		1.05
Mogoditshane—Mmopane—E corner of airport	896	28.4		18		7.08	
Mogoditshane—Mmopane—E corner of airport	1,092		30.9		14		4.14
Makgomane—Tswaaneng	1,132	48		4		0.74	
Makgomane—Tswaaneng	1,256		47.1		4		0.68
TOTAL OF 33 TRANSECTS (2007 data)	36,950	31.9	33.6	480	417	4.07	3.3
Lentsweletau—Botlhapatlou (January 2008)	1,962	29.3		37		6.25	
Pitsane—Tlharaseleele—Rakhuna	692	54.5		4		1.06	
TOTAL OF ALL DATA	39,604	32.2		521		4.09	

There is no correlation between change in area of suitable habitat and change in numbers, indicating that there is currently no shortage of suitable habitat. While near Mmankgodi and Kopong a decline in numbers appears to be related to bush encroachment, there are other transects where numbers have increased despite a large decrease of suitable habitat between the two surveys. For example, for the transect from immediately north of Thamaga westwards along the power-line, the area of suitable habitat decreased from 490 ha to 216 ha, whilst the number of pairs recorded increased from 14 to 23 pairs.

In 2007 the highest densities of Short-clawed Larks were recorded for the transect northwards from Kubung to north of Losilokgokong, with 25 pairs in 189.86 ha, i.e. 1 pair / 7.6 ha. Noticeably high densities were also recorded locally around Gathwane, on a section of the transect from Good Hope to Lorwana. Around Gathwane ten pairs were recorded in 78 ha of suitable habitat, a density of 1 pair / 7.8 ha. In 1992, between Ranaka and Ntlhantlhe, 30 pairs were recorded in 234 ha of suitable habitat, i.e. 1 pair / 7.8 ha.

Continued occupation by territorial males

In both surveys, coordinates (correct to the nearest hundredth of a minute) were recorded for the point on the road closest to each territorial male. The perpendicular distance from the road was also recorded. With these data the localities of territories could be compared between the two surveys.

For all birds recorded less than 110 m from the road in 2007, 38% (127 out of 334) were in the same localities (±100 m) as a territorial male in 1992–93. For birds <60 m from the road, 39% (93 of 237) were at the same location (±100 m) as a territorial bird in 1992–93. However, continued occupation of localities by territorial males was in general lower, or even non-existent, for transects where Short-clawed Lark occurs at lower densities and higher for transects with higher densities. Such a relationship is perhaps not unexpected as where Short-clawed Larks occur at highest densities, the great majority of suitable habitat is likely to be occupied. The highest continued occupation of localities by territorial males was for all three transects near Ntlhantlhe where 63% of the territories <110 m from the road remained occupied and 68% of those <60 m from the road.

Range limits

The 1992–93 survey found that the core range of Short-clawed Lark extended westwards to Phitsane Molopo, Tswaaneng, Metlobo, Pitseng and Gasese. Field work in January 2008, in areas not visited in 1992–93, established that it extends slightly further west along the Molopo Valley, west of Phitsane Molopo. The westernmost record in this area is of a bird seen west of Leporung at 25°47.50'S 24°52.27'E. In January 2008 the species was also found commonly to the south of Sesung. These records extend its known range but it seems likely that it had simply been overlooked in 1992–93, due to lack of visits, rather than the species has expanded its range.

Between Gasese and Letlhakeng, along the Moshaweng Valley, there was a drastic reduction in numbers at the edge of the range between the two surveys: from 24 territorial males in 1992 to only three in 2007. In 2007, the most northerly record was in the Moshaweng Valley at 24°22.97'S 25°01.04'E, exactly where there was also a record in 1992, whereas in 1992 the northernmost record was at 24°14.82'S 24°59.84'E, 16 km further north. The apparent contraction of range from the northern Moshaweng Valley is the only indication of any change in the core range between the two surveys.

The northern limit of the core range of Short-clawed Lark is *c.*24°00'S. North this there are only scattered records. There were two isolated records in 1993, north-west of the core range, one *c.*14 km north-northwest of Letlhakeng and the other *c.*17 km north-west of Botlhapatlou. These two locations were not visited in 2007–08; both are situated in valleys, which provide some localised suitable habitat, in areas that are largely unsuitable for Short-clawed Larks, due to the predominant Kalahari sands.

In 1992 two birds were found near Lephephe, well to the north of the core range of the species, and birds were also recorded at two other different locations to the east-northeast of Lephephe. There was also, in 1992, an isolated record east of Shoshong at 23°15.01'S 26°34.85'E, which is the most northerly location at which Short-clawed Lark has been reported in Botswana. In 2007–08 the Lephephe area was searched, without success, for Short-clawed Lark. Attention was then focused on the Sojwe area, west of Lephephe, where a territorial bird was eventually located 11 km

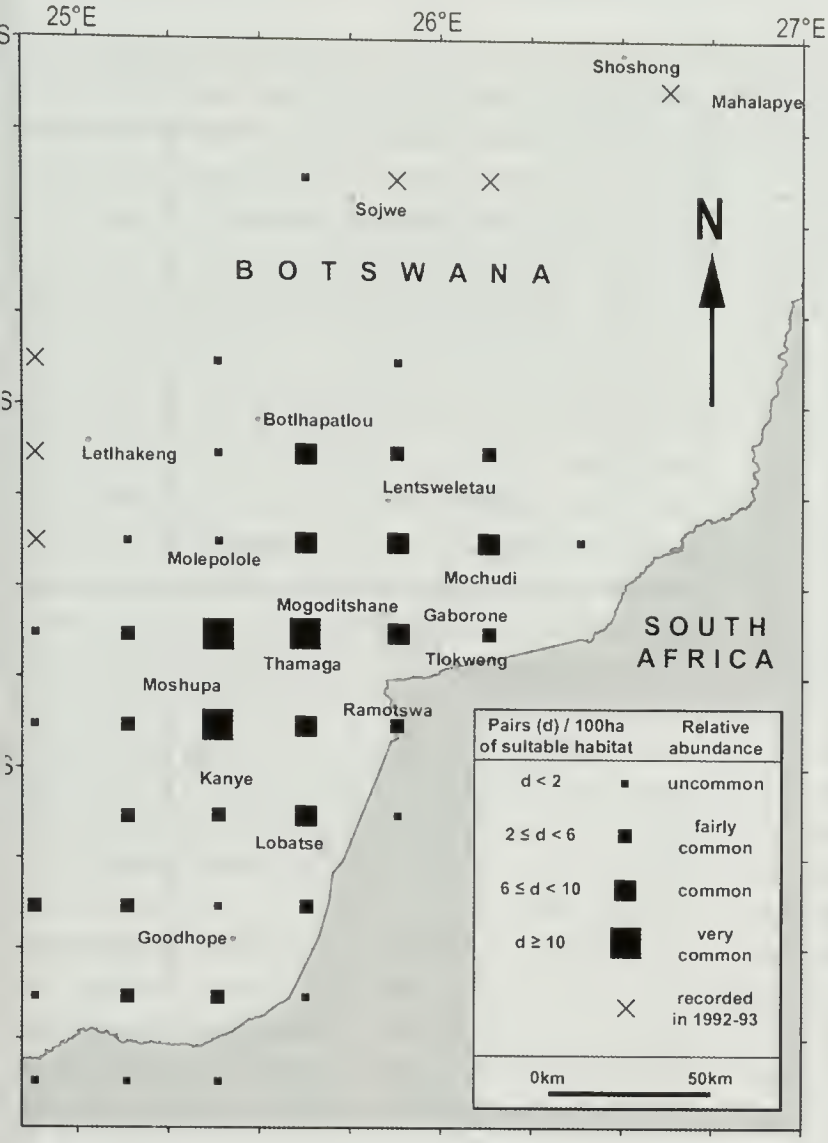

Figure 4. Distribution of Short- clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in south-eastern Botswana 2007–08.

Répartition de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana* au sud-est du Botswana 2007–08.

north of Sojwe. The continued presence of Short-clawed Lark in the Lephephe area was therefore confirmed, though it certainly must occur only sparsely in this area

In the east, in 1992–93, transect surveys from Sikwane and from Mochudi to Olifants Drift failed to produce any records of Short-clawed Lark and, apart from one record *c.*20 km south-east of Mochudi, on the road to Mabalane, it was not found to the east of Mochudi. In January 2008 territorial birds were seen about 22 and 28 km east north-east of Mochudi. These records extend the known limits of its range in the east; it is likely, however, that Short-clawed Lark had been overlooked in this area, due to lack of visits, rather than the species had extended its range.

Short-clawed Lark was searched for, without success, between Tlokweng, a large urbanised village immediately to the east of Gaborone, and the South African border; the predominantly black cotton soils in this area appear to provide unsuitable habitat. It was neither recorded in the city of Gaborone, nor on freehold land immediately to the south of Gaborone, where suitable habitat is lacking. On most freehold land to the north and south of Lobatse it is likely to be absent due to lack of suitable habitat (rocky hills and wooded savannas). It does, however, occur commonly close to the South African border in the Ramotswa area.

Population estimate

An estimate of the population of Short-clawed Lark in south-eastern Botswana involves the consideration of several parameters. These include the range, the proportion of the range that is suitable, the representativeness of the transects, the density in suitable habitat and the proportion of the territories that were detected in surveys.

The total range, excluding the outlying Lephephe area, where it occurs only sparsely, is estimated at 16,000 km^2. For the calculations, we use 2007 and January 2008 transects except for parts of three transects (Mmamashia–Mabalane, Mabalane–Mochudi and Letlhakeng–Gasese) that are not considered to be within the range. 2002 data (Department of Surveys and Mapping, Gaborone, *in litt.* 2008) indicate that 42.8% of the range of Short-clawed Lark has a land-use which could make it suitable for the species. From our transect surveys 31.7% is suitable habitat and the average density of Short-clawed Lark here was 3.9 pairs / 100 ha; we use these figures in the calculation.

The proportion of occupied territories that were detected during transect surveys is more debatable than the other variables. We use the figure of an efficiency of 46% as indicated by the curve in Fig. 3, which could represent a probability-density function.

Based on the above figures, we estimate the total population of Short-clawed Larks at 43,000 pairs. If the efficiency of the data is assumed to be higher (e.g. 60%, see discussion for particular reasons affecting the probability of recording),

the population could be 33,000 pairs. Both these figures contain a wide margin of error. While it is difficult to make a more accurate estimate, it seems reasonable to assume that the total population in 2007 was in excess of 20,000 pairs. This is an improvement on the previous estimate ('over 10,000 pairs') made by Herremans (2005), which even referring to data of 1992–93 may have been too prudent.

Discussion

For comparable transects a 12.9% increase in numbers and a 19.2% increase in density was recorded between the two surveys. The methods used for the two surveys were the same. However, some of the differences in numbers could possibly be accounted by factors other than an increase in numbers. For example, comparable transect surveys could have possibly been undertaken at different times of day, when detection rates are not necessarily the same. Secondly, weather conditions might not have been the same for comparable transects; surveys undertaken in good conditions are likely to be more comprehensive than surveys undertaken in unfavourable conditions, such as windy or hot days. There might too have been differences in the approaches of the observers. Due to these factors it likely, as stated above, that the data contain a wide margin of error. Nevertheless, the results of the two surveys suggest that there has been a modest increase in numbers between the two surveys.

There appear to be three possible reasons for a greater proportion of birds being recorded closer to roads. Firstly, detection probability decreases with distance: birds that are at greater distance from the road are more likely to be overlooked as their vocalisations are less likely to be heard than those that are closer to the road, particularly on windy days. Secondly, as already indicated, Short-clawed Larks tend to move towards an intruder, which makes them more likely to be encountered nearby than further away. Birds at greater distances are, however, expected to be less likely to move to an intruder as their territories would be less likely to include the road. Thirdly, the use of a tape-recording to locate territorial birds is more likely to be effective for birds nearby than for distant birds, particularly because the vehicle's sound system was not powerful (50 watt). However, these factors could be partially offset by the tendency of all males to commence singing when they hear one male start to sing. These reasons indicate that the probability-density function as presented in Fig. 4 might underestimate the efficiency of the surveys, because there are genuine reasons for birds to be detected closer to the roads.

The decline in numbers recorded around Kopong and Mmankgodi is likely to be related to a relatively large reduction in suitable habitat: in 2007, bush encroachment on land that had previously been cultivated was particularly noticeable. When fields are not cultivated any longer and become steadily encroached by bushes and trees, primarily acacias, they become unsuitable. For the three transects between Mmathethe, Good Hope and Metlojane, however, the decrease in the number of pairs recorded between the two surveys is not obviously related to a change in habitat; there was actually a large increase in suitable habitat for these transects. The factors that might have caused this apparent reduction in numbers are unclear.

Engelbrecht (2005) states that males defended approximately 6–10-ha territories in a study of the eastern population in the Polokwane Game Reserve. The size of these territories is remarkably similar to the highest densities recorded in the two surveys in Botswana. This suggests that when Short-clawed Lark was recorded at its highest densities in south-east Botswana, almost all available suitable habitat was occupied by territorial males.

Considering, firstly, that not all territorial birds were recorded and, secondly, that 12.9% more territories were located in 2007 compared to 1992–93, the degree of continued occupation of localities by territorial birds is probably considerably higher than the above figures suggest. If all territories <60 m from the road were detected in 2007 and 60% of the territories, irrespective of the distance from the road, were detected in 1992–93, then an estimated 65% of the localities recorded as occupied in 2007 were also occupied in 1992–93. Given the higher number of territories recorded in 2007, the degree of continued occupation of localities over the period between the two surveys is likely to be slightly higher, possibly over 70%. These figures suggest that localities have ceased to be occupied at an estimated average rate of *c.*3% per annum between the two surveys.

Threats

The data from 2007 support Herremans' (1997, 2005) contention that Short-clawed Lark in south-east Botswana is almost totally restricted to tribal land that is cultivated using traditional agricultural practices. Any changes to agricultural practices are therefore likely to have an impact on the species.

Although there is an extensive block of freehold farms to the north and south of Lobatse, the great majority of agricultural land is tribal land under traditional farming practices. While there have been no major changes in either land ownership patterns or farming practices in recent years, and none seem likely in the near future, there has been a steady decrease in the area of tribal land that has been cultivated for field crops (Ministry of Agriculture, Gaborone, *in litt.* 2008). Botswana is prone to a great variation in rainfall from year to year. In drought years the area planted with field crops is very small, while in years of good rainfall a much greater area is planted. For the ten years from 1981–82 to 1990–91, mean annual area planted for field crops in the traditional sector was 227,890 ha. For the ten years from 1996–97 to 2005–06 (the last year for which figures are available) this area decreased by 53% to 106,260 ha. In 1988–89, a year of good rainfall, 237,100 ha of sorghum and 76,000 ha of maize were planted in the traditional sector, while in 2005–06, another year with good rainfall, the totals were only 38,700 and 45,900 ha. These figures illustrate the precipitous decline of the area planted with sorghum in the traditional sector in recent years. The area planted with maize has also decreased, but less markedly. Though there are no supporting data, the reasons for these decreases are likely to be primarily socio-economic. With increasing prosperity and a higher standard of education young people tend to lose interest in farming. Older people also appear to have lost some of the enthusiasm to farm, either due to increasing age or due to the opportunity now to be able to rely financially on their relatives working in the urban areas. Whereas previously, young people would help their older relatives with cultivation of their fields, now they are more likely to be gainfully employed in urban areas and unable to assist their relatives in cultivation of the land. In 2008 the government introduced a new scheme, ISPAAD (Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agricultural Development), to support the traditional sector, in a bid to reverse the decline in crop production.

The result of declining cultivation of field crops is a decline in the availability of suitable habitat for Short-clawed Larks. As less land is cultivated, fields are encroached by bushes, rendering them unsuitable. It is unclear how long it takes for a fallow field to become bush encroached, but it is likely to be more rapid in years of high rainfall than in dry years and when there is no grazing by livestock. Though there are no supporting data, it seems possible that it can take ten years or more for a fallow field to be encroached by *Acacia* to the extent that it becomes unsuitable for Short-clawed Lark. For several years, when bushes are coppicing, the land can still be suitable.

The other main threat to Short-clawed Larks is likely to be the expansion of settlements, particularly the city of Gaborone and the villages nearby. While currently Gaborone is situated on land that in recent years has never provided suitable habitat for Short-clawed Larks, the rapid expansion of the city and of nearby villages, such as Mogoditshane, Mmopane and Metsimotlhaba, is taking place where Short-clawed Larks occur at relatively high density. Inevitably there will be a localised decline in the numbers of Short-clawed Larks, particularly to the north of Gaborone. The expansion of settlements is also taking place elsewhere in south-east Botswana, albeit to not such a great extent. It is possible, too, that the large numbers of small stock discourage farmers to cultivate fields close to the settlements due to the high risk of goats destroying their crops. Therefore bush encroachment of fields is likely to be greater close to settlements than elsewhere. This was noted particularly around Kopong, Mmankgodi and Lorwana.

The current favourable status of Short-clawed Lark in south-east Botswana is in sharp contrast with that in the adjacent parts of its range in South Africa, where the species has experienced an apparent range contraction and a possible decline in numbers (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2007). The factors that Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007) consider to be inimical to Short-clawed Lark in South Africa include commercial agriculture, cultivation of pasture grass, insufficient grazing pressure resulting in excessively lush vegetation, bush encroachment in areas with traditional agricultural practices and, lastly, development. In contrast to

its status on agricultural land there, where very few birds were found, it was common in the Botsolano Game Reserve, a protected area in Botswana close to the South African border, near Pitsane, where commercial agriculture, cultivation of pasture grasses and insufficient grazing pressure do not occur, or only marginally so. Bush encroachment and development have, as yet, only a localised effect on numbers in south-eastern Botswana.

In conclusion, Short-clawed Lark is currently still doing well in south-eastern Botswana. Results suggest that numbers have shown a small increase since an earlier survey was undertaken in 1992–93. Its conservation status is favourable, and, due to a possible decline in numbers in South Africa (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2007), its population probably constitutes an increasingly large proportion of the world population of this species. However, the continued decline in the cultivation of field crops using traditional practices presents a potential threat. The most beneficial support for the species would appear to be an incentive, by the government of Botswana, to farmers to cultivate sorghum and maize using traditional practices. This would not only support the Short-clawed Lark but also improve farmers' livelihoods and Botswana's food security.

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Appendix 1. Gazetteer of localities
Annexe 1. Liste des localités citées

Boatle	24°50'S 25°49'E	Mmopane	24°44'S 25°52'E
Borobodilepe	25°37'S 25°29'E	Mochudi	24°23'S 26°08'E
Borotsi	24°57'S 25°43'E	Modipane	24°37'S 26°07'E
Bokaa	24°26'S 26°01'E	Mogobane	24°58'S 25°42'E
Botlhapatlou	24°02'S 25°30'E	Mogoditshane	24°37'S 25°52'E
Dipotsana	25°14'S 25°25'E	Mogonye	24°49'S 25°42'E
Gaborone	24°40'S 25°55'E	Molepolole	24°24'S 25°31'E
Gamoswane	25°07'S 25°29'E	Mosopa	24°47'S 25°25'E
Gasese	24°31'S 25°03'E	Ntlantlhe	24°58'S 25°35'E
Good Hope	25°28'S 25°26'E	Olifant's Drift	24°11'S 26°51'E
Hatsalatladi'	24°08'S 25°35'E	Oodi	24°34'S 26°02'E
Hebron	25°40'S 25°24'E	Pelotshetlha	25°12'S 25°22'E
Kanye	24°58'S 25°20'E	Pilane	24°24'S 26°05'E
Kopong	24°28'S 25°54'E	Pitsane	25°28'S 25°36'E
Kubung	24°37'S 25°20'E	Phitshane Molopo	25°45'S 25°13'E
Lephephe	23°21'S 25°51'E	Pitseng	24°41'S 25°02'E
Leporung	25°46'S 24°58'E	Rakhuna	25°34'S 25°34'E
Letlhakeng	24°06'S,25°02'E	Ralekgetho	24°41'S 25°11'E
Lentsweletau	24°15'S 25°51'E	Ramotswa	24°52'S 25°53'E
Lobatse	25°13'S 25°40'E	Ranaka	24°55'S 25°28'E
Lorwana	25°19'S 25°32'E	Rasesa	24°22'S 26°05'E
Losilokgokong	24°33'S 25°22'E	Sesung	24°53'S 25°00'E
Mabalane	24°38'S 26°22'E	Shoshong	23°02'S 26°30'E
Makgomane	25°33'S 25°14'E	Sikwane	24°38'S 26°24'E
Metlobo	25°26'S 24°58'E	Sojwe	23°26'S 25°45'E
Metlojane	25°32'S 25°22'E	Thamaga	24°40'S 25°32'E
Mmamashia	24°32'S 26°00'E	Tlharaseleele	25°29'S 25°37'E
Mmankgodi	24°44'S 25°39'E	Tlokweng	24°40'S 25°57'E
Mmathethe	25°19'S 25°16'E	Tswaaneng	25°31'S 24°59'E

Cataloguing the Lubango Bird Skin Collection: towards an atlas of Angolan bird distributions

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Cataloguer la collection de peaux d'oiseaux de Lubango : vers un atlas des répartitions des oiseaux angolais. La collection de peaux d'oiseaux logée à Lubango, Angola, comprend plus de 40.000 spécimens, représentant plus de 850 taxons. En juin 2008, nous avons travaillé sur la collection pendant deux semaines, afin de collecter des données concernant la distribution des espèces. Ces travaux font partie d'un projet atlas pour les oiseaux de l'Angola. La collection est toujours en bon état et le «Instituto Superior da Ciências e Educação» (ISCED), qui abrite la collection, doit en être félicité. Les données mentionnées sur les étiquettes de 15.000 peaux, dont celles de tous les spécimens des espèces moins connues, ont été saisies dans une base de données informatisée. Les 25.000 enregistrements restants sont faits sur la base de photos des «fiches de catalogue». Les spécimens les plus intéressants sont ceux de quatre Aigrettes vineuses *Egretta vinaceigula*—les premières données pour l'Angola de cette espèce cataloguée mondialement «Vulnérable». D'autres exemples de peaux intéressantes sont illustrés par des photos et attirent l'attention sur l'importance de la collection pour des études systématiques. La collection de mammifères est aussi mentionnée brièvement. Enfin, des recommandations sont faites pour la gestion future de la collection.

Summary. The bird collection housed in Lubango, Angola, contains more than 40,000 skins, representing more than 850 taxa. As part of an atlas project for Angolan birds, we visited the skin collection for two weeks in June 2008, to extract distributional information from the specimens. The skin collection is still in good condition, and the Instituto Superior da Ciências e Educação (ISCED), which houses the collection, is to be commended for this. Data from labels of 15,000 skins were entered into an electronic database, including all specimens of lesser known species. The remaining 25,000 entries are being made from photographs of 'catalogue' cards. The most interesting specimens are four Slaty Egrets *Egretta vinaceigula*, the first records of this globally Vulnerable species in Angola. Other examples of interesting skins are illustrated in various photographs, drawing attention to the importance of the collection for systematic studies. A brief mention is also made of the mammal collection. Finally, a list of recommendations is given for the future management of the collection.

With the sixth-longest bird list of any African country, Angola harbours an exceptionally rich biodiversity. Add to this one of Africa's highest bird conservation priorities—the Western Angola Endemic Bird Area (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998) and its biologically important scarp forests—and the biological importance of the country becomes unquestionable. During the 1960s and 1970s the country's biodiversity was investigated, plant and animal collections established, and several reserves were appropriately managed (Huntley 1974), but 30 years of civil unrest have left conservation and research in Angola well behind that of other southern African countries. Basic information on species distributions is poor, and the network of reserves is dysfunctional.

Recent peace and stability have provided new opportunities for improving the situation. As a first step, old reserves need to be re-established, knowledge of species distributions updated and

Figure 1. The team working on the skin collection, entering details from bird labels into a database (Michael Mills)

L'équipe travaillant sur la collection de peaux, saisissant par ordinateur les données mentionnées sur les étiquettes (Michael Mills)

refined, key gaps in the conservation network identified and remedied, and links built with Angolan counterparts. Whilst available data on Angolan bird distributions were recently summarised (Dean 2000), the contents of the largest collection of Angolan bird skins, referred to here as the Lubango Bird Skin Collection (LBSC), were largely unknown. Summaries based on some information contained in the LBSC were published by Pinto (1970, 1972, 1973, 1983), but the collection of more than 40,000 specimens must be considered the largest untapped source of information on Angola bird distributions, and a primary source for systematic research. A sizeable collection of mammal skins and skulls is also housed here.

The aim of our visit to Lubango was four-fold: (1) to report on the condition of the LBSC and make recommendations for its future management, (2) to garner valuable distributional information from the LBSC on birds (and to a lesser degree bats), (3) to draw attention to the value of the collection for study purposes, and (4) to build links for future research and capacity building in Angola, centred on the collection. Here we report on the condition of the LBSC and make recommendations for its future management and use, draw attention to the importance of the collection by highlighting its contents, and provide a progress report on the cataloguing of the skin collection. Links with Angolan counterparts are being developed on several fronts, most notably through the work of Brian Huntley and colleagues of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), but are not reported on here.

Short history of the skin collection and collecting in Angola

The LBSC is one of the largest collections of bird specimens in south-central Africa and contains many well-prepared specimens, comparable in quality to any collection in Africa. The collection is a tribute to the late Dr António da Rosa Pinto, who, in 1958, began the nucleus of the collection by leading a collecting trip to Moxico Province, in the east of the country. At the time, Dr Pinto was a teacher at Salazar High School in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) in Mozambique, and was in Angola on an official 'temporary' mission with the objective of establishing an Ornithology Department at the Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola (IICA). In 1963 Dr Pinto was appointed leader of the Centre for Studies at the IICA in Lubango. He subsequently managed to gather a very competent group of collectors and taxidermists, most of them Angolans, familiar with the birds and the countryside. This group, usually a team of six men but involving over 60 different personnel over the years, served the IICA well by establishing a collection of over 40,000 specimens, representing almost all of the avian taxa known to occur in Angola. The collection is currently housed at the the Instituto Superior da Ciências e Educação (ISCED), whose staff is to be commended for maintaining the collection in excellent condition.

Although the collection at Lubango contains very little 'old' material, there is a long history of collecting natural history specimens in Angola. Bird collections had commenced by the 1850s, with visits by Dr Francisco Welwitsch, a botanist who collected some birds between 1853 and 1860, and Joaquim Monteiro, a mining engineer who collected birds in 1858–67. Collecting activity at about this time was stimulated by requests for bird specimens from Prof. J. V. du Bocage in Portugal, who requested that military and administrative officers in Angola collect birds for him. Also, in 1864, José Alberto D'Oliviera Anchieta went to Angola to collect birds for Prof. Bocage. His first collection, said to be 'rich', was lost in a shipwreck (Pinto 1983). Anchieta returned to Angola in 1866, and remained in the country until his death in 1897. He worked mostly in central and western Angola, collecting almost 4,400 specimens of 460 species of birds, of which 46 were new species to science.

A number of collectors of many different nationalities followed Anchieta in the late 1800s; O. Sala (Dutch), C. J. Andersson (Dean *et al.* 2006; Swedish), A. W. Eriksson (Swedish), C. Hamilton (British), J. Falkenstein (German), L. Petit and A. Lucan (French), O. Schütt and F. W. von Mechow (Steinheimer & Dean 2007; German), P. J. van der Kellen (Dutch) and the Valdivia Expedition. Many of these are remembered in the names of Angolan birds. With interest growing in the natural history of Angola, expeditions sponsored by museums began to visit the country in the early 1900s: the French mission of Rohan-Cabot (Ménégaux &

Berlioz 1923), the Swiss scientific expedition to Angola in 1928–29 (Monard 1934), the Phipps-Bradley expedition (with Rudyerd Boulton as collector), the Vernay-Angola expedition and collecting trips by Hubert Lynes and Jack Vincent (Lynes & Sclater 1933, 1934), and the Pulitzer-Angola expedition, again with Rudyerd Boulton as collector. Boulton subsequently collected and described a new endemic species, Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri* (Boulton 1931). In 1929–30, the Gray African Expedition of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, collected birds and mammals in central-western Angola (Bowen 1931, 1932), and an Italian expedition in 1930 collected the holotype of an endemic subspecies of Lühder's Bushshrike *Laniarius luehderi amboinensis* (Moltoni 1932). Individuals, some sponsored by museums and owners of private collections, were also active in Angola during the early 1900s. Dr William Ansorge made several trips to Angola between 1903 and 1909, collecting *c.*8,000 bird specimens (and many previously undescribed freshwater fish). The Portuguese naturalist Francisco Newton visited Angola at about the same time (de Seabra 1905), C. H. Pemberton collected in 1901–02 and Willoughby Lowe collected some material in the Luanda area in 1910–11 (Bannerman 1912). Important collections in the 1930s were made by Jean Bodaly who collected birds at Chitau, Bié, and by H. K. Prior at Dondi, Huambo. During a similar period, Rudolf Braun, who was resident in Angola, collected some material, most of which is now in the Zoological Museum in Berlin. The last collections of birds in Angola before the Ornithology Department of the IICA was established were made by H. A. Beatty, who collected for the Field Museum in Chicago. In two separate major collecting trips in 1954–55 and 1957, Gerd Heinrich collected birds for the Zoologisches Institut, Hamburg, the Field Museum and the Peabody Museum at Yale University. The Transvaal Museum and the British Museum sponsored expeditions in the 1950s, and both expeditions obtained very useful study material. With the exception of some birds donated to the IICA by Heinrich and the British Museum, most of the specimens collected between 1850 and 1960 in Angola are scattered in museums in Europe, the UK and North America. However, many of the specimens collected in Angola and sent to Portugal in the late 1800s and early 1900s were destroyed in a fire at the University of Lisbon in 1978 (Mearns & Mearns 1998), and many other specimens have not been traced. Fortunately the bird collection at Lubango remains intact and is an extremely important source of reference material for ongoing research on the birds of Angola.

Methods

For two weeks in June 2008 the authors worked at the LBSC. Bird specimens were removed from drawers and information displayed on their labels transcribed into an electronic database on laptop computers (Fig. 1). The following information was captured for each specimen: specimen number, species name, subspecies, sex, age, weight, collection date and locality, and collector's name. In addition, photographs were taken of many skins, including representatives of all of the rarer specimens. Lesser known species were generally processed first. During the available time, data from 15,000 specimens were captured into the database, covering all of the rarer species. Handwriting on the labels was often hard to read, requiring substantial cleaning of the database, to correct names of collection localities and collectors. This work is ongoing.

In addition to entering data from labels, specimen 'catalogue' cards (*cf.* Fig. 2) were photographed for the entire collection. Each card represents a single species and subspecies, and contains the following information on specimens belonging to the taxon:

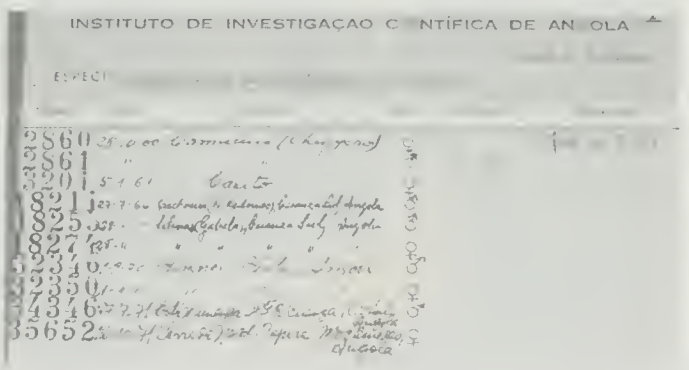


Figure 2. An example of the bird 'catalogue' cards, for Grey-striped Francolin *Francolinus griseostriatus*, giving the specimen number, date and location of collection, and sex (Michael Mills)

Un exemple d'une «fiche de catalogue», pour le Francolin à bandes grises *Francolinus griseostriatus*, avec le numéro du spécimen, date et localité de collection, et sexe (Michael Mills)


3a


3b


6


4


7


5


8

Legend to figures on opposite page

Figure 3. Two of the four specimens of Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* in the collection: (a) adult, (b) immature. These are the first published records of the species in Angola (Michael Mills)

Deux des quatre spécimens de l'Aigrette vineuse *Egretta vinaceigula* de le collection : (a) adulte, (b) immature. Il s'agit des premières données publiées de l'espèce pour l'Angola (Michael Mills)

Figure 4. A comparison of Black-chinned Quailfinch *Ortygospiza gabonensis* (top) and African Quailfinch *O. fuscocrissa* (bottom), from Angola. The latter species has a white chin and spectacles, but overall the species are very similar and may belong to a single species (Payne & Sorenson 2007). Skins from the Lubango museum come from a contact zone of the two taxa and could be used as part of a detailed phylogenetic study using multiple representatives from each quailfinch form, required to properly test whether the three detected genetic lineages exhibit consistent plumage differences (Fry & Keith 2004, Payne & Sorenson 2007) (Michael Mills)

Une comparaison entre l'Astrild-caille à face noire *Ortygospiza gabonensis* (en haut) et l'Astrild-caille à lunettes *O. fuscocrissa* (en bas) de l'Angola. La dernière espèce a le menton blanc et des lunettes blanches, mais pour le reste les deux espèces sont très semblables et pourraient comprendre une seule espèce (Payne & Sorenson 2007). Les spécimens du musée de Lubango proviennent d'une zone de contact des deux taxons et pourraient servir pour une étude phylogénétique détaillée. Une telle étude devrait utiliser plusieurs représentants de chaque forme d'astrild-caille pour pouvoir examiner si les trois lignées détectées ont des différences de plumage consistantes (Fry & Keith 2004, Payne & Sorenson 2007) (Michael Mills)

Figure 5. Male (top) and female (bottom) specimens of Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus*, collected in Huambo town (previously Nova Lisboa) in March 1966 probably the most recent of this rare species in Angola. Only two other specimens are listed in Dean (2000), with the only other localities being Galanga (the type locality) and Mombolo (Michael Mills)

Spécimens mâle (en haut) et femelle (en bas) du Tisserin à menton noir *Ploceus nigrimentus*, collectés à Huambo (auparavant Nova Lisboa) en mars 1966 probablement les mentions les plus récentes de cette espèce rare en Angola. Seulement deux autres spécimens, de Galanga (la localité type) et Mombolo, sont mentionnés par Dean (2000) (Michael Mills)

Figure 6. An example of the striking endemic male Golden-backed Bishop *Euplectes aureus* in breeding plumage (top), alongside Yellow Bishop *E. capensis* (bottom). A population of Golden-backed Bishop on São Tome is believed to have been introduced (Fry & Keith 2004) (Michael Mills)

Un exemple du remarquable mâle en plumage nuptial de l'endémique Euplecte doré *Euplectes aureus* (en haut), à côté de l'Euplecte à croupion jaune *E. capensis* (en bas). La population de l'Euplecte doré à São Tome est supposée avoir été introduite (Fry & Keith 2004) (Michael Mills)

Figure 7. The near-endemic Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* (second, fourth and sixth) alongside the distinctive, endemic *gadowi* subspecies of Bronzy Sunbird *N. kilimensis*. Bocage's Sunbird is dark purple and black, whereas Bronzy Sunbird is greenish bronze and has a longer, more curved bill (Michael Mills)

Le quasi endémique Souimanga de Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii* (deuxième, quatrième et sixième spécimens) à côté de la sous-espèce endémique distincte *gadowi* du Souimanga bronzé *N. kilimensis*. Le Souimanga de Bocage est violet foncé et noir, tandis que le Souimanga bronzé est bronze verdâtre et a un bec plus long et plus arqué (Michael Mills)

Figure 8. The very similar Bates's Sunbird *Cinnyris batesi* (top) and Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi* (bottom). The latter is overall brighter green, with a shorter, straighter bill; Bates's Sunbird is greyer below, and has a black tail, which is hard to see in the field (Michael Mills)

Les très semblables Souimanga de Bates *Cinnyris batesi* (en haut) et Souimanga de Seimund *Anthreptes seimundi* (en bas). Ce dernier a le plumage vert plus vif, avec un bec plus court et plus droit ; le Souimanga de Bates est plus gris dessous et a une queue noire, ce qui est difficile à voir sur le terrain (Michael Mills)

specimen number, collection date and locality, and sex for each example in the collection. Photographs of these cards (4,661 in total, representing 859 species) have now been labelled and ordered by family. Data entry is continuing using these photographs, but is expected to take at least another 18 months to complete.

A small amount of time was dedicated to comparing specimens of similar species, and taking side-by-side photographs, as well as inspecting the mammal collection.

Findings

Broadly, the collection remains in excellent condition, free of insect damage. Specimens are housed in wooden drawers lined using paper, in 28 large wooden cupboards. All specimens are labelled and the complete collection of field journals remains with the skins. However, the room in which the collection is kept is incredibly dusty, the field journals are unordered and poorly

Table 1. Details of the four specimens of Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* in the Lubango Bird Skin Collection.
Tableau 1. Données sur quatre spécimens de l'Aigrette vineuse *Egretta vinaceigula* logés dans la collection de peaux d'oiseaux de Lubango.

Specimen details				Collection details		
No.	Sex	Age	Mass (g)	Locality	Date	Collector
23532	F	Imm.	300	Rio Cunene (Quiteve)	27 June 68	A. R. Pereira
23257	F	Ad.	245	Luamúcua (Quiteve)	19 June 68	D. Mumputu
23259	F	Ad.	175	Luamúcua (Quiteve)	19 June 68	A. R. Pereira
23432	F	Imm.	300	Rio Cunene (Quiteve)	24 June 68	D. Mumputu

kept, and a large number of mounted specimens are clumsily arranged, making for poor working conditions. Although the collection has been kept in good condition by Prof. José Luis Alexandre and his staff at ISCED, there is no official curator or ornithologist at the collection. The current 'caretaker' of the collection has no training in biology or taxidermy, and the collection remains largely unused. There is not yet an official protocol for access, although permission to work on the collection can be granted by the Dean of ISCED, Prof. Matondo Tomalela. Francisco Miata is employed and trained to maintain and care for the herbarium collection housed here, and a counterpart in the bird collection is urgently needed.

The LBSC is significant for both the number of specimens it contains (>40,000) and the great variety of taxa presented (>850), including numerous rarer species. More than 1,600 photographs of skins were taken, representing >400 species, and have been databased. The most interesting discovery was the presence of four specimens of Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*, erroneously labelled as Black Herons *E. ardesiaca* (Fig. 3). These specimens (Table 1; Fig. 1) were all collected during a trip to Quiteve, Huila Province, on the banks of the Cunene River (16°02'S 15°11'E), on 19–27 June 1968, and constitute the first records of this Vulnerable species for Angola (Dean 2000).

Some other specimens of interest are summarised in Table 2 and species and species comparisons are illustrated in Figs. 4–12.

DO worked exclusively on the Ploceidae. Most Angolan Ploceidae are represented in the collection, notable exceptions being Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius* and Slender-billed *P. pelzelni*. Pinto (1972) listed a specimen of *P. pelzelni* collected in Cabinda that should have been present in the museum and is listed on the 'catalogue' cards, but it was not found. While the collection generally contains few types, it does house the type series of the subspecies of Scaly-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes squamifrons pallidus* described by Pinto (1967). Several rare or uncommon weavers are represented: Black-chinned Weaver *P. nigrimentus* (2), Loango Weaver *P. subpersonatus* (2), Brown-capped Weaver *P. insignis* (5), Black Bishop *Euplectes gierowii* (1 from Tanzania) and Golden-backed Bishop *E. aureus* (47). Three specimens of Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* were collected by Pinto from the isolated Lake Dilolo during August 1958 (Pinto 1965, Dean 1996), with further specimens from this expedition housed at the Lisbon Museum (Louette 1984). It has been suggested that these birds belong to the *reichardi-ruweti* species complex (Dean 2000). The LBSC specimens are dull-plumaged, but one is a male starting to moult: there are a few orange feathers on the upper throat. Other than this orange plumage anomaly (the throat should be turning black), the weavers appear to match nominate Southern Masked Weaver found further south in Angola. The nearest locality for Southern Masked Weaver is in north-west Zambia (Dowsett *et al.* 2008).

Mammals

The mammal collection at Lubango consists of skins and skulls of a variety of species. The aim of this expedition was to catalogue the bird collection, thus there was only limited time for AM to examine the mammals, which numbered more than 3,000 specimens of at least 123 species. The bats were examined in greatest detail and included 211 specimens of 23 species. This represents about one third of the 63 species known to occur in Angola. With respect to collecting sites, there is a geographical bias towards the south-east of the country, which is unsurprising since that is where

Table 2. Summary of some of the more interesting specimens contained in the Lubango Bird Skin Collection, with the number of specimens for each species (No.).

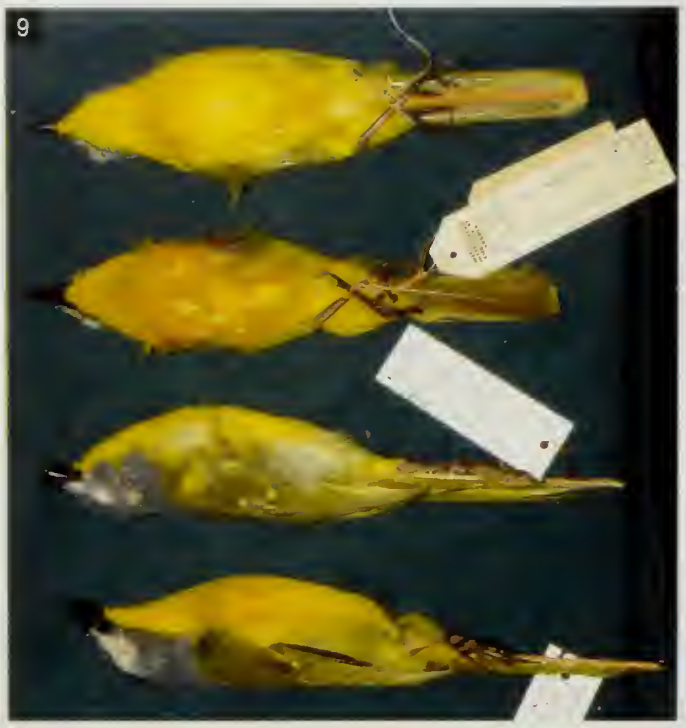
Tableau 2. Aperçu d'un nombre de spécimens intéressants dans la collection de peaux d'oiseaux de Lubango, avec l'indication du nombre de spécimens pour chaque espèce (No.).

Common Name *Scientific Name*	No.	Notes
Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris*	3	Rare in Angola
Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*	6	Vulnerable endemic
Grey-striped Francolin *Francolinus griseostriatus*	12	Near-Threatened endemic
White-throated Francolin *Francolinus albogularis*	6	Rare in Angola
Horus Swift *Apus horus*	12	Form *toulsoni*, often treated specifically as Loanda Swift
Bradfield's Hornbill *Tockus bradfieldi*	16	Scarce species
White-headed Barbet *Lybius leucocephalus*	37	Endemic and distinctive ssp. *leucogaster*
Benguela Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda benguelensis*	55	Near-endemic
Grimwood's Longclaw *Macronyx grimwoodi*	38	Data Deficient
Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*	31	Endemic
Black-necked Eremomela *Eremomela atricollis*	65	Localised species
Congo Moor Chat *Myrmecocichla tholloni*	29	Near-endemic
Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*	7	Endangered endemic
Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*	4	Endangered endemic
Laura's Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus laurae*	1	Endemic ssp. *laurae*; rare in Angola
Rock-loving Cisticola *Cisticola aberrans*	6	Endemic ssp. *bailunduensis*
Angola Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis brunneus*	32	Endemic
Margaret's Batis *Batis margaritae*	1	Rare in Angola; endemic ssp. *margaritae*
White-fronted Wattle-eye *Platysteira albifrons*	4	Near-Threatened near-endemic
Bare-cheeked Babbler *Turdoides gymnogenys*	15	Near-endemic
Black-faced Babbler *Turdoides melanops*	21	Near-endemic
Rockrunner *Chaetops pycnopygius*	22	Near-endemic
Bannerman's Sunbird *Cyanomitra bannermani*	13	Near-endemic
Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii*	11	Near-endemic
Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis*	76	Endemic
Oustalet's Sunbird *Cinnyris oustaleti*	31	Localised species
Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela*	3	Endangered endemic
Chestnut-backed Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*	82	Near-endemic
Bar-winged Weaver *Ploceus angolensis*	11	Near-endemic
Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus*	2	Near-endemic
Golden-backed Bishop *Euplectes aureus*	47	Endemic
Dusky Twinspot *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea*	29	Endemic ssp. *cinereovinacea*

Lubango is situated. The collection includes a number of interesting bat specimens such as two D'Anchieta's Fruit Bat *Plerotes anchietae*, a species known from just 11 specimens (Bergmans 1989, Kock *et al.* 1998); 21 specimens of Angolan Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomophorus angolensis*, an Angolan near-endemic; and African Sheath-tailed Bat *Coleura afra*, a widespread species but in southern Africa known from just three specimens (Monadjem *et al.* in press). Non-chiropteran mammals well represented in the collection include genets (*Genetta*), hares (*Lepus*), hyraxes (dassies) (*Heterohyrax* and *Procavia*) and at least 33 genera of rodents. Primates are particularly poorly represented with skins of just six species.

Habitats: erosion of biodiversity in the environs of Lubango

The habitats in which birds were collected between 1958 and 1974 ranged from coastal desert through palm and baobab savanna on lowland alluvium along the Cunene River, to grassland and sclerophyllous shrubland on the sandstones of the high-altitude tableland that surrounds



Lubango, to escarpment forest along the 'Scarp' and equatorial gallery forest along various rivers. Travelling from northern Namibia to Lubango we passed successively through palm savanna and mopaneveld, baobab savanna, *Baikiaea* (teak) woodland on yellow sand, mixed woodland with *Combretum*, *Terminalia*, *Commiphora* and *Albizia* set among spectacular granite hills, and then, at higher altitudes on red sands, miombo woodland. The sandstone plateau above the town of Lubango supports stunted miombo and a high diversity of shrubs including *Protea welwitschi* and grass trees *Xeris* sp. Closed Afromontane forest patches occurred in deep, well-watered gorges on the escarpment. When the bird collection was constituted, in 1958–74, the human population of Angola was sparse and most of the woodland in the southern part of Angola was intact. Tall woodland that included large specimens of such hardwoods as *Pterocarpus angolensis* (kiaat), *Combretum* (bush willow) and *Baikiaea* plurijuga (teak) extended from the Namibian border to Lubango.

Human population growth over the past four decades has changed the face(s) of the landscape. Within a 50-km radius of Lubango miombo woodlands have been cleared and replaced with subsistence agriculture based on grain crops, goats and cattle, with charcoal made from large miombo trees as a cash supplement. Further from the city of Lubango bags of charcoal and honey for sale at roadside markets are witness to the continued erosion of the woodland, as trees make way for more subsistence crops, cut to raid bee hives, ringbarked for materials used in medicine or to construct bark hives, and converted to charcoal

Legend to figures on opposite page

Figure 9. The endemic Monteiro's Bushshrike *Malaconotus monteiri* (second and fourth) alongside its closest relative, Grey-headed Bushshrike *M. blanchoti*, which differs in lacking the pale ring around the eye, in having a yellowish, not greyish eye, and a less robust bill. Monteiro's Bushshrike is supposedly less orange below (Fry & Keith 2000, Sinclair & Ryan 2003), but these two specimens contradict this (Michael Mills)

L'endémique Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malaconotus monteiri* (deuxième et quatrième spécimens) à côté de son parent le plus proche, le Gladiateur de Blanchot *M. blanchoti*, qui diffère par l'absence du cercle oculaire pâle et par son œil jaunâtre, non pas grisâtre, et son bec moins fort. Le Gladiateur de Monteiro est supposé être moins orange dessous (Fry & Keith 2000, Sinclair & Ryan 2003), mais ceci est contredit par ces deux spécimens (Michael Mills)

Figure 10. Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae* (second and fourth) alongside examples of the Data Deficient Grimwood's Longclaw, well represented in the collection by 38 specimens of two subspecies, *grimwoodi* and *cuandocubangensis*, the latter not mentioned in Keith *et al.* (1992) (Michael Mills)

La Sentinelle à gorge rose *Macronyx ameliae* (deuxième et quatrième spécimens) à côté d'exemplaires de la Sentinelle de Grimwood, espèce «Insuffisamment documenté» bien représentée dans la collection par 38 spécimens de deux sous-espèces, *grimwoodi* et *cuandocubangensis*. Cette dernière n'est pas mentionnée par Keith *et al.* (1992) (Michael Mills)

Figure 11. The Endangered, endemic Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela* (first and third) alongside its closest relative, the widespread Retz's Helmetshrike *P. retzii*, illustrating the latter species' larger size and darker plumage (Michael Mills)

Le Bagadais de Gabela *Prionops gabela* (premier et troisième spécimens), espèce endémique «Menacée d'extinction», et son parent le plus proche à large distribution, le Bagadais de Retz *P. retzii*, illustrant la taille plus grande et le plumage plus foncé de ce dernier (Michael Mills)

Figure 12. Two subspecies of Meves's Starling *Lamprotornis mevesii* found in Angola; the more glossy *mevesii* (top and third) alongside the duller *benguelensis*, endemic to the southern escarpment zone, that may deserve specific status (Hall 1960). Specimens from the Lubango Bird Skin Collection could help unravel the systematics of this species (Michael Mills)

Deux sous-espèces du Choucador de Meves *Lamprotornis mevesii* représentées en Angola: *mevesii*, plus brillant (en haut et troisième), et *benguelensis*, endémique de la zone australe de l'escarpement, plus terne. Les deux formes pourraient être des espèces à part entière (Hall 1960); des spécimens de la collection de Lubango pourraient servir à élucider leur taxonomie (Michael Mills)

for heating and cooking in the ever-growing urban centres. Large trees are disappearing in even quite remote areas such as the slopes above the precipitous cliffs of the escarpment at Leba. Smoke rising from the woodland, cut stumps, charcoal pits, paths made by ox-drawn sleds, and feathers of wild birds used to sustain the woodcutters bear silent witness to the ongoing erosion of the natural capital of this beautiful land.

Towards an atlas

One of the objectives of compiling a catalogue and database of the bird specimens in the Lubango collection is to build a georeferenced database of bird specimen records for Angola. These data will be merged with another database, containing data on distributions taken from Traylor (1963), Pinto (1983), Dean (2000) and Mills & Dean (2007), data on bird specimens in other collections and sight records of birds contributed by visitors to Angola. These data will then be mapped, probably at a 15' × 15' scale. The maps will provide guidelines for the recommendation of protected areas and will also provide some basic distribution patterns, useful for modelling effects of climate change and potential environmental disasters (e.g. oil spills from offshore wells along the northern coast). Gap analyses using these data will establish priorities for future ornithological field work in Angola.

Bird atlas studies not only show bird distribution patterns, but more importantly also identify areas for which there are no data. Globally, bird atlases have made a key contribution to conservation, through highlighting the conservation priorities of species (providing fundamental data for Red Data listing) and habitats (e.g. Fishpool & Evans 2001). Angola, emerging from decades of political instability, is a country where knowledge of bird distributions is particularly poor, although the avifauna is diverse. Most surveys and collecting have been conducted in western and north-central Angola, and along the coastal areas and parts of the Mayombe in Cabinda. We do not know whether gaps in the distribution of certain species are 'real' or artefacts of surveys. An atlas will help close these gaps or show whether they are real. This has important implications for conservation in Angola in that attention will then be drawn to areas of high avian species richness, which might also prove to be areas of high species richness amongst other taxa. Identifying focal areas will

also lead to an evaluation of land use practices in these areas and an assessment of their impacts; for example, charcoal burning using native woodland (miombo species complex) trees.

Recommendations for the collection

Although the collection is being kept in reasonable condition, conditions can be greatly improved and the collection should be put to practical use. We recommend that the following steps be taken:

- Produce an electronic database of the bird skin collection, which work is in progress, and once the database is complete, copies will be provided to colleagues in Angola and worldwide, to promote work using the skins. Data will start to be made available online via the website of Natural World (www.natworld.org) within the next 12 months.
- Training of (a) young Angolan ornithologist(s), to act as curator for the collection.
- Possible 'adoption' of the collection by a foreign museum to assist with training and to improve the conditions in which skins are kept.
- Cleaning of the entire room in which the skins are housed.
- Properly organising all documents pertaining to the collection.
- Cleaning and cataloguing the valuable collection of books associated with the collection.
- Encouraging collaboration between Angolan and foreign researchers, using the skin collection as a point of contact.
- Stimulate interest in Angolan birds by incorporating informative visits to the collection in standard biology courses at the institute and making use of the specimens for student projects.

Conclusions

Given the threats to biodiversity in Angola, it is important that some of the plant and animal collections from the 1970s remain in the country to guide and inspire a new generation of Angolan scientists. With the help of SANBI, other biodiversity experts in the South African Development Community and assistance from outside the region there may still be time to plan a protected area network for Angola that will retain all vegetation types and the associated fauna. Without planning, active protection and initiatives to provide alternative sources of income for the local inhabitants, it is unlikely that the next generation of Angolans will be able to enjoy the beauty of the country and the biological diversity experienced by their grandparents, to taste wild honey, see Giant Sable *Hippotragus niger variani* in the wild, or even to simply find sufficient wood or charcoal for their daily needs.

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Bird observations from São Tomé: Monte Carmo as a priority conservation site

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Observations d'oiseaux de São Tomé : Monte Carmo comme site de priorité pour la conservation. A l'occasion d'inventaires effectués sur l'île de São Tomé, dans le Golfe de Guinée, en juillet–août 2007, 46 espèces ont été trouvées, y compris tous les taxons endémiques. L'abondance avienne, basée sur le taux de rencontre, est plus élevée dans les forêts montagnardes que dans les forêts à plus basse altitude, mais ces dernières abritent plus d'espèces. Les zones agricoles supportent une avifaune mixte d'espèces endémiques et introduites. Les espèces les plus abondantes dans les deux habitats forestiers sont quatre espèces endémiques : le Souimanga de Newton *Anabathmis newtoni*, la Prinia de São Tomé *Prinia molleri*, le Tisserin de São Tomé *Ploceus sanctithomae* et le Serin roux *Serinus rufobrunneus*. Les forêts de basse altitude de Monte Carmo (Ribeira Peixe) abritent plusieurs Ibis de Bocage *Bostrychia bocagei* dans une zone relativement limitée, ainsi que le Néospize de São Tomé *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor* et la Pie-grièche de São Tomé *Lanius newtoni*. Le Nasique de Bocage *Amaurocichla bocagii* et la pie-grièche ont aussi été observés au dessus de 1.000 m dans la zone d'Ana Chaves. Les forêts de Monte Carmo sont considérées comme une priorité pour des projets de conservation, qui pourraient inclure du tourisme basé sur l'observation des oiseaux, mais leur avenir est incertain à cause des développements récents dans les plantations d'huile de palme avoisinantes.

Summary. Surveys carried out on the Gulf of Guinea island of São Tomé in July–August 2007 found 46 species, including all of the endemic taxa. Bird abundance was higher in montane forests, based on encounter rates, than in forests at lower elevations, but the latter held more species. Agricultural areas supported a mixed avifauna of endemic and introduced species. Numerically dominant species in both forest habitats were the endemic Newton's Sunbird *Anabathmis newtoni*, São Tomé Prinia *Prinia molleri*, São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae* and Príncipe Seedeater *Serinus rufobrunneus*. The low-elevation forests of Monte Carmo (Ribeira Peixe) held several Dwarf Olive Ibises *Bostrychia bocagei* in a comparatively small area, as well as São Tomé Grosbeak *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor* and São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*. São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagii* and the fiscal were also recorded above 1,000 m in the Ana Chaves area. The forests of Monte Carmo are considered a priority for conservation projects, which might include birding-based tourism, but their future is uncertain because of recent developments in nearby oil-palm plantations.

The islands of São Tomé (857 km^2) and Príncipe (139 km^2) in the Gulf of Guinea hold at least 17 and eight single-island endemics, respectively, probably representing the largest number of endemic birds per land area for any island group (Melo 2007, Melo & Jones in press). Several of the endemics are of conservation concern, mostly due to habitat loss, including the Vulnerable São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagii* and the Critically Endangered Newton's Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*, São Tomé Grosbeak *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor* and Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei* (BirdLife International 2008).

These volcanic islands possess a rugged topography with limited level ground along the coast and in some valleys. São Tomé reaches 2,024 m, whilst on Príncipe the highest elevations peak at 945 m. Fast-running streams radiate down the mountains through lush forest and cropland to the sea on both islands (Christy & Clarke 1998, Jones & Tye 2006). The islands are covered in lush montane and low-elevation forest, shade forests (cocoa and coffee plantations), derelict plantations (*capoeiras*) and some open savannah (on São Tomé).

The islands were first occupied by humans after their discovery by the Portuguese in the 1470s, and their economy became dependent on cash crops, especially cocoa and coffee, both cultivated under shade trees in large plantations (*roças* or shade forest) (Seibert 2002). The result was that most forest below 1,000–1,200 m was drastically modified, if not destroyed; the least disturbed forest areas at lower elevations are concentrated in the wettest south-western part of São Tomé, and in southern Príncipe. On the other hand, one of

the key habitats on both São Tomé and Príncipe is the shade forest or *capoeira* resulting from the abandonment of former plantations of cocoa, coffee, coconut and oil-palm after independence in 1975 (Christy & Clarke 1998, Jones & Tye 2006).

Data on the local avifauna appeared only after the mid-19th century. Due to the country being closed to most foreigners until the recent past (Seibert 2002), updated information on some of the rarest endemics became available only after the 1980s (Sargeant 1994, Jones & Tye 2006). More recent research has addressed the taxonomy and biogeography of the endemics (Melo 2007, Melo & Jones in press), compared the densities of endemic species in different habitats and human impacts (Dallimer *et al.* 2009) and the distribution and basic ecology of the threatened species (ABS 2007, Maia & Alberto 2009).

São Tome possesses three Important Birds Areas (IBAs) that encompass the main habitat types (lower elevation and montane forests, and savannahs (Christy 1998). Some sites within the IBAs have been well explored by ornithologists, such as the montane forests of Lagoa Amélia and the nearby *capoeiras* and agricultural mosaic of Bom Sucesso (Rocha 2008, Dallimer *et al.* 2009). However, areas such as the lower elevation forests of Monte Carmo, above Ribeira Peixe, although well known to birders and visited by researchers (Melo 2007, Leventis & Olmos 2009), lacked descriptions of their bird communities.

Here we report the findings of a bird survey on São Tomé during a fact-finding visit to the islands sponsored by BirdLife International and the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute carried out between 13 July and 12 August 2007, with further on visits in January and July–August 2008.

Study sites and Methods

Observations were made along existing paths in selected localities according to access and bird species expected to be found. Characterisation of the different vegetation types follows Jones & Tye (2006).

Bom Sucesso (00°17'20"N 06°36'45"E; 1,148 m): visited on 19, 23–28 July and 9 August. The site of the national botanical garden and a gateway to the trails leading to Pico de São Tomé, Lagoa Amélia and other locations in the central massif. A nearby elevation (Macrambalá) is also accessible by vehicle, with a trail starting along the ridge overlooking the Nova Ceilão Valley (walked on 28 July). The gardens cover a small area, with both native and introduced trees, and flowering plants. This area is surrounded by farms cultivating bananas, plantains, carrots and yams, with isolated clumps of trees. Large areas are occupied by invasive grasses and herbs. This part of the island is much cooler and more subject to mist than lower elevations.

Lagoa Amélia (00°16'50"N 06°35'36"E; 1,385 m): visited on 23–24 and 26–27 July. Covering montane forest inside Parque Natural Obô this well-known birding spot is accessed via a track from Bom Sucesso. Within the park's boundary, which is already encroached by farmland, the forest becomes continuous as the track ascends the mountain. Trees may reach over 30–35 m, with a heavy cover of moss and epiphytic plants. Exotic bamboos along the track mark old roads between now derelict *roças*. Lagoa Amélia is an old volcanic crater, now filled by grassy vegetation (no standing water during our visit), surrounded by montane forest.

Monte Carmo (campsite at 00°09'06"N 06°33'60"E; 363 m): visited on 1–4 August. Situated in the south-west of the island near Ribeira Peixe, this is a well-known site for the rarest species on São Tomé (Leventis & Olmos 2009), and is reached after a two-hour walk from the nearby oil-palm plantation of Emolve. Above the plantation the vegetation gradually changes from *capoeira* and shade forest to mature low forest (with many *Symphonia globulifera*) and the trail follows a fairly gentle slope bordered by deep valleys. The ground is commonly strewn with rocks, which probably precluded cultivation. There are many level areas along the slope and water collects in some places. Signs of foraging feral pigs were plentiful. This is one of the wettest parts of the island and it rained throughout our stay, despite this being the 'dry' season.

Sites in São Tomé where only qualitative observations were carried were Roça Bindá (00°13'10"N 06°27'57"E; 30 m) and Roça Juliana de Sousa (00°12'01"N 06°28'20"E; 214 m), both visited on 15 July; Roça Bombaim and Formoso Grande (campsite at 00°13'51"N 06°37'42"E; 631 m), visited on 29–30 July; the well-known trail between Bom Sucesso and Pico de São Tomé,

and from there down to Ponta Figo (see Christy & Clarke 1998), walked on 16–17 July; and the headwaters of the rio Ana Chaves (00°15'45"N 06°34'23"E, 1,182 m), visited on 9 August.

Birds seen or heard were recorded along the trails, including species with far-carrying vocalisations such as orioles and pigeons. Quantitative data were recorded only when it was not raining, accounting for the seemingly low effort at Monte Carmo. Some species were sound-recorded, the relevant files being available at Xeno-canto (XC; www.xeno-canto.org/africa). As a measure of relative abundance we used encounter rates (Bibby *et al.* 1998) expressed by the number of individuals recorded per ten hours (see Table 1 for sampling effort). This index and its variations give a less subjective idea of the relative abundance and detectability of birds present in a given area (Pacheco & Olmos 2005).

We took GPS coordinates of all individual Dwarf Olive Ibises, São Tomé Fiscals, São Tomé Grosbeaks and São Tomé Short-tails detected. As reliable altitude readings could not always be made due to the dense tree cover we use values obtained from GoogleEarth throughout this paper. Nomenclature principally follows Jones & Tye (2006) with the modifications suggested by Melo (2007) and Melo & Jones (in press).

Results and Discussion

All endemic birds known on São Tomé were recorded (Table 1). Overall, 45 species were observed, including one seabird nesting in tree hollows in the forest and one shorebird on the beach. Twenty-five species were found in the agricultural mosaic of Bom Sucesso and the *capoeiras* between Bindá and Juliana de Sousa, both sharing 16 species, whilst 20 were found in the shade plantations and *capoeiras* of Bombaim. The environs of São Tomé town harboured 22 species, including most of the introductions, many of which also occur at Bom Sucesso, but montane and lowland forests support only native species. None of the introduced birds has, to date, colonised the latter habitats despite the long history of European colonisation and trade with mainland Africa (Seibert 2002, Jones & Tye 2006).

Montane forests at Lagoa Amélia, where survey effort was greatest, held 15 species compared to 20 at the lower elevation Monte Carmo, with 12 of these shared. Species found only in mature or old secondary forest included Dwarf Olive Ibis, São Tomé Short-tail, São Tomé Fiscal and São Tomé Grosbeak, all found at Monte Carmo.

We found no evidence of any endemic species breeding during our survey, and only two (São Tomé Oriole *Oriolus crassirostris* and Newton's Sunbird *Anabathmis newtoni*) consistently responded to playback. São Tomé Prinia *Prinia molleri* was commonly seen performing aerial displays, but these appear to occur year-round (Christy & Clarke 1998, Jones & Tye 2006). Only Vitelline Masked Weavers *Ploceus velatus* were observed nest building and displaying, but several São Tomé Weavers were observed nest building in the Bom Sucesso area during the July 2008 visit.

A greater richness at Monte Carmo agrees with the findings of Dallimer *et al.* (2009), who compared Lagoa Amélia with another lower elevation site, rio São Miguel, in western São Tomé. The main difference between forest types uncovered by their study and ours was the lack of endemics such as the ibis, fiscal, grosbeak, short-tail and Giant Weaver *Ploceus giganteus* in montane forest. On the other hand, that the ibis, fiscal and short-tail do occur in montane forest some distance from Lagoa Amélia (Rocha 2008; see below) lends credence to the theory that human activities like hunting and gathering of forest products result in lower densities of those species (Dallimer *et al.* 2009).

The point counts undertaken by Rocha (2008) found 15 species in montane forest in the Bom Sucesso / Lagoa Amélia area, although his sampling in less-disturbed areas further from Lagoa Amélia resulted in the addition of Dwarf Olive Ibis and São Tomé Short-tail. The agricultural mosaic of Bom Sucesso yielded only 17 species, compared to 25 in our list, a difference probably the result of recce walks being a more effective method of recording uncommon species.

As noted by other observers (Christy & Clarke 1998, Jones & Tye 2006) most endemic birds utilise shade plantations and agricultural areas with a mosaic of cultivation, sparse trees and hedges, which finding has since been corroborated by more detailed research (Rocha 2008). These habitats possess abundant introduced plants providing nectar (the shade tree *Erythrina poeppigiana* and the shrub *Tithonia diversifolia*)

and fruit (the trees *Cecropia peltata* and *Musanga cecropioides* plus several cultivated species; the shrub *Cestrum levigatum*) consumed by many endemics (Leventis & Olmos 2009). Species such as Príncipe Seedeater *Serinus rufobrunneus*, São Tomé Flycatcher *Tersiphone atrochalybeia*, São Tomé Thrush *Turdus olivaceus*, São Tomé Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus f. fulgidus*, Newton's Sunbird and the globally threatened São Tomé White-eye *Zosterops* (*ficedulinus*) *feae* had their highest encounter rates in the Bom Sucesso mosaic compared to nearby forest, although this result masks differences among discreet habitats (annual cultivation, tree clumps, banana groves, etc.) comprising the mosaic.

Birds, as a whole, were commonest in Lagoa Amélia compared to Monte Carmo, with encounter rates of 540 birds / 10 hours at the first compared to 170 at the latter. Limited sampling effort and almost constant rain during our stay at Monte Carmo were factors, but the lower abundance of birds observed was striking, especially of common species such as prinias, speirops and Newton's Sunbird (Table 1).

The commonest endemics (Príncipe Seedeater, Newton's Sunbird, São Tomé Speirops *Zosterops lugubris* and São Tomé Weaver) were also the most abundant species in both montane and lower elevation forest, but with striking differences in relative abundances. Overall, Monte Carmo had lower encounter rates for most endemics, and the white-eye was absent. Only the flycatcher, starling and speirops had encounter rates that could be considered similar.

King & Dallimer (2003) and Dallimer *et al.* (2009), using mist-netting and point counts, also found striking differences between montane and lowland forests in the relative abundances of São Tomean endemics, with montane forest holding greater numbers of seedeaters, prinias, speirops, São Tomé Weaver and Newton's Sunbird. In contrast, orioles, paradise flycatchers, thrushes and Giant Sunbird are commonest at lower elevations. Data from encounter rates broadly agree with this pattern.

Significant records

Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei* This species was recorded only at Monte Carmo, a known site for the species together with the Ió Grande River and hillsides in the Formoso Grande area (ABS 2007, Leventis & Olmos 2009). What sounded like a call was heard briefly at a distance in Formoso Grande. Although considered silent compared to other *Bostrychia* ibises (Christy & Clarke 1998, Jones & Tye 2006), on 1 August three birds were heard calling from different perches at dusk and one called at dawn on 2 August. The voice (XC 18130) is, however, similar to related species.

Despite being used by hunters, Monte Carmo harbours an important ibis population. On 1 August we recorded the first ibis near the campsite, perched *c.*8 m above ground. On 2 August, at 06.18 hrs, one was seen perched in the lower canopy at 00°09'02.8"N 06°34'05.1"E (321 m), with another nearby at 10.00 hrs. On 3 August we found eight birds during the morning (07.10–11.20 hrs) while walking from 00°08'52.1"N 06°34'14.7"E (303 m) to 00°09'13.2"N 06°33'52.9"E (386 m). These included four lone birds and two 'pairs', one of the latter comprising an adult and a juvenile (which had a shorter bill and drabber plumage). All of these birds, except one of the lone individuals, were foraging on the ground when first seen, with one bird perched on a tree. Additionally, on 4 August another pair was found at 00°08'55.6"N 06°34'32.6"E (*c.*284 m) in a tree-fall gap in second-growth forest with little leaf litter and much exposed soil.

Sightings were at least 150 m apart (the latter much further), but we can not discount the possibility of double-counting, although we tried to track the direction birds flew or if they remained perched when we lost contact with them. The clumped records show an extraordinary gathering of those rare, apparently solitary birds, in a small area.

The ibises foraged alone or in loose family groups, and were quite silent by day, calling only at dusk and dawn, if at all. All were in mature or old second-growth forest at 150–400 m with well-spaced large trees, very open undergrowth and large patches of exposed soil resulting from feral pig activity or rainwater. In some areas, the soil was largely covered by irregularly shaped rocks, which also results in an open understorey. The association between ibises and disturbed soil or open understorey has been mentioned previously (Jones & Tye 2006).


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São Tomé Maroon Pigeon *Columba thomensis* Two adults perched on a jackfruit tree at Juliana de Sousa, with another in montane forest at Pico Carvalho (00°16'12"N 06°34'35"E; 1,595 m) on 18 July, and one in the same spot on 9 August feeding on the fruit of *Schefflera manii*. Another adult seen at 00°17'04"N 06°33'25"E (1,165 m) on 20 July completes our records of this uncommon species. The record at Juliana de Sousa (214 m) reveals that the species is not strictly associated with montane forest and can utilise *capoeira* at low elevations, at least seasonally.

Dallimer *et al.* (2009) found this species is not a montane specialist as has sometimes been suggested (Jones & Tye 2006), with significant populations present in the lowlands of western São Tomé, where Juliana de Sousa is sited. On the other hand, it was not found at Monte Carmo during our survey (although one was seen in January 2008), suggesting its occurrence in the lowlands might be patchy or seasonal.

São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagii* Although Jones & Tye (2006) set the altitudinal limit for this species at 500 m, Dallimer *et al.* (2003) found one at 1,100 m in the island's central massif, the same general area where the species was found breeding by Rocha (2008). Maia & Alberto (2009) found short-tails to be regular dwellers in montane forests above 1,300 m, and fairly common in some areas.

Our records support those findings. We located the species near Formoso Grande, where a pair was seen repeatedly on 29–30 July at 00°13'50.6"N 06°37'44.4"E (622 m) in a gully cut by a stream running among boulders in low forest. More interestingly, on 9 August we also found short-tails along the slope of the Ana Chaves Valley, where a pair was seen at 00°15'45.4"N 06°34'23.7"E (1,174 m), and a lone individual at 00°15'36"N 06°34'25"E (1,162 m), all in steep terrain covered by transitional montane-low forest, and away from water. As noted by Maia & Alberto (2009), this suggests that potential habitat for the species is more extensive than had been assumed.

The species was also found at the well-known area of Monte Carmo. A pair was seen at 00°09'09"N 06°34'14.8"E, *c.*230 m, and a lone bird at the campsite, both on 1 August. Next day, a trio, a pair and a single individual were recorded while walking the area of more level ground between the campsite and 00°09'14.4"N 06°32'04.3"E, a transect of *c.*4 km. On 3 August a pair was seen on the ground at 00°09'13.2"N 06°33'52.9"E in an area where the undergrowth was open with many rocks on the forest floor, which appears washed by rain, with little litter. Another bird was observed in the lower strata (3–4 m high) on more level ground at 00°09'13.2"N 06°33'52.9"E (386 m), at least 100 m from a wet gully. One bird was also seen nearby the following morning.

In the very humid forests of Monte Carmo only one pair was closely associated with water, foraging near the ground by a drainage line with a trickle of water. The others were seen on the forest floor and lower strata of the forest. In montane forests, Maia & Alberto (2009) also found short-tails were not particularly associated with water, unlike as previously suggested (Atkinson *et al.* 1991), and this finding was corroborated for lower elevation forest by Dallimer *et al.* (2009).

São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni* Restricted to few sites in the south-east and south-west of São Tomé (those areas of highest rainfall), from the Bombaim / Formoso area south-west through the Ió Grande Valley (Schollaert & Willem 2001), the Martim Mendes basin above Ribeira Peixe and west to the Xufexufe basin (King & Dallimer 2003) to *c.*1,300 m (Maia & Alberto 2009). On 3 August, one was observed low down in a narrow forested gully at Monte Carmo (00°09'12.7"N 06°33'48.9"E; 400 m).

Our excursion to Ana Chaves, south-west of the Bombaim / Formoso area and within the headwaters of the Ió Grande, had the specific goal of finding this species. The site lies in a deep valley with steep slopes. As we descended we heard

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Figure 1. **(a)** São Tomé Scops Owl / Petit-duc de São Tomé *Otus hartlaubi*; **(b)** São Tomé Green Pigeon / Colombar de São Tomé *Treron sanctithomae*; **(c)** São Tomé Short-tail / Nasique de Bocage *Amaurocichla bocagei*; **(d)** São Tomé Thrush / Merle de São Tomé *Turdus olivaceofuscus*; **(e)** Juvenile São Tomé Oriole / Loriot de São Tomé *Oriolus crassirostris*; **(f)** Male São Tomé Oriole / Loriot de São Tomé *Oriolus crassirostris*; **(g)** Male São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher / Tchitrec de São Tomé *Tersiphone atrochalybeia*; **(h)** São Tomé Prinia / Prinia de São Tomé *Prinia molleri* (Fábio Olmos, except (c) A. P. Leventis)

Table 1. Bird species recorded during this survey. Numbers indicate the number of individuals detected per ten hours of all-records censuses, whilst x indicates species recorded outside census periods.

Tableau 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées pendant l'inventaire. Les chiffres indiquent le nombre d'individus détecté par dix heures de recensement, tandis que x indique les espèces observées en dehors des périodes de recensement.

A: Farms around Bom Sucesso, including tree clumps and small remnant forest patches amid cultivated areas. Census effort: 5.5 hours.
B: Montane forest near Bom Sucesso, mostly along the trail to Lagoa Amélia and to Novo Ceilão. Census effort: 14.15 hours.
C: Low forest around the Monte Carmo campsite. Census effort: 7.8 hours.
D: Trail through shade forest and *capoeira* (old coconut and cocoa plantations) between roças Bindá and Juliana de Souza. Census effort: only qualitative observations.
E: Trek through montane forest from Bom Sucesso up Pico de São Tomé and down to shade forest above Ponta Figo. Census effort: only qualitative observations.
F: Tall shade forest near Roça Bombaim. Census effort: qualitative observations.
G: Gardens, orchards, vacant lots, urban areas and the airport environs around São Tomé town. Census effort: only qualitative observations.

A : Zones cultivées autour de Bom Sucesso, y compris des fourrès et des lambeaux de forêt au milieu de cultivations. Effort de recensement : 5,5 heures.
B : Forêt montagnarde près de Bom Sucesso, principalement le long du sentier vers Lagoa Amélia et Novo Ceilão. Effort de recensement : 14,15 heures.
C : Forêt de basse altitude autour du camp à Monte Carmo. Effort de recensement : 7,8 heures.
D : Sentier à travers de la forêt ombrophile et de *capoeira* (vieilles plantations de cocotiers et de cacao) entre roças Bindá et Juliana de Souza. Effort de recensement : uniquement des observations non systématiques.
E : Trajet à travers de la forêt montagnarde de Bom Sucesso à Pico de São Tomé et, à la descente, traversant la forêt ombrophile au dessus de Ponta Figo. Effort de recensement : observations non systématiques.
F : Forêt ombrophile près de Roça Bombaim. Effort de recensement : observations non systématiques.
G : Jardins, vergers, terrains vagues, zones urbaines et environs de l'aéroport autour de la ville de São Tomé. Effort de recensement : observations non systématiques.

Common name	Scientific name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
White-tailed Tropicbird	*Phaethon lepturus*			x	x			
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	12.5			x		x	
Green-backed Heron	*Butorides striata*				x		x	
Western Reef Heron	*Egretta gularis*				x			
Dwarf Olive Ibis	*Bostrychia bocagei*			11.5				
Yellow-billed Kite	*Milvus (migrans) parasitus*				x			x
Red-necked Spurfowl	*Francolinus afer*	x						
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*							x
São Tomé Green Pigeon	*Treron sanctithomae*	1.8	10.6	2.6	x	x	x	
São Tomé Bronze-naped Pigeon	*Columba malherbii*	3.6	2.1					
São Tomé Lemon Dove	*Columba larvata simplex*	16.1	26.1	2.6	x	x	x	
São Tomé Maroon Pigeon	*Columba thomensis*				x	x		
Feral Pigeon	*Columba livia*	x						x
Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	1.8			x		x	x
Red-headed Lovebird	*Agapornis pullarius*				x			x
Emerald Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx cupreus insularum*	1.8			x		x	
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba thomensis*	x						x
São Tomé Scops Owl	*Otus hartlaubi*			x	x	x		
São Tomé Spinetail	*Zoonavena thomensis*	69.6	4.9		x	x	x	
Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus parvus*	12.5			x		x	x
Common Swift	*Apus* cf. *apus*							x
Little Swift	*Apus affinis bannermani*	8.9			x		x	x
São Tomé Kingfisher	*Alcedo (cristata) thomensis*				x		x	
São Tomé Thrush	*Turdus olivaceofuscus*	16.1	9.2	1.3	x	x	x	x
São Tomé Prinia	*Prinia molleri*	35.7	42.4	12.8	x	x	x	x
São Tomé Short-tail	*Amaurocichla bocagii*			7.7				
São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher	*Tersiphone atrochalybeia*	26.8	14.1	15.3	x		x	
Newton's Sunbird	*Anabathmis newtoni*	128.6	84.1	20.4	x	x	x	x

Common name	Scientific name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Giant Sunbird	*Dreptes thomensis*		3.5	1.3		x	x	
São Tomé White-eye	*Zosterops (ficedulinus) feae*	50.0	17.0			x		
São Tomé Speirops	*Zosterops lugubris*	117.9	114.5	17.9	x	x	x	
São Tomé Fiscal	*Lanius newtoni*			x				
São Tomé Oriole	*Oriolus crassirostris*	12.5	21.2	14.0		x		
São Tomé Chestnut-winged Starling	*Onychognathus f. fulgidus*	17.9	2.8	2.6	x	x	x	x
Vitelline Masked Weaver	*Ploceus velatus peixotoi*	35.7		1.3		x		x
Giant Weaver	*Ploceus grandis*			x	x	x		
São Tomé Weaver	*Ploceus sanctithomae*	30.4	84.8	25.5	x		x	x
Fire-crowned Bishop	*Euplectes hordeaceus*							x
Common Waxbill	*Estrilda astrild*	282.1					x	x
Southern Cordon-bleu	*Uraeginthus angolensis*							x
Bronze Mannikin	*Lonchura cucullata*	50.0						x
Pin-tailed Whydah	*Vidua macroura*							x
Yellow-fronted Canary	*Serinus mozambicus*							x
Príncipe Seedeater	*Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis*	123.2	102.5	33.2	x		x	x
São Tomé Grosbeak	*Serinus (Neospiza) concolor*			x				

a bird calling at 00°15'45.4"N 06°34'23.7"E (1,174 m). More were heard when we reached the bottom at 00°15'39.4"N 06°34'33.9"E (1,065 m) and playback during the next three hours elicited vocal response, although no birds approached the source. At least three were heard together along the creek running along the valley, one of them <20 m away.

Together with information in the literature our records suggest an association between this species and watercourses, or at least to more open areas in forest, like gullies and riversides, created by water. That could mean that fiscal habitat is more linear, or patchy, than currently believed.

São Tomé Grosbeak *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor*
Positively recorded only from lower altitude forest in the south-west of the island (Jones & Tye 2006), although there is one record from the Monte Café area, near Bom Sucesso (Simpson 2002). In the Monte Carmo area (at 00°09'12.4"N 06°33'55.3"E; 370 m), we heard a song identified as a grosbeak (XC17889) on 4 August at 07.50 hrs. The bird responded but did not approach after playback, moving to a nearby gully, where two individuals were seen in the canopy and lower understorey. The same recording was successfully used to attract a pair in the Monte Carmo area in January 2008.

Conservation issues

Recent conservation initiatives in the country have been linked mostly to ECOFAC (Central Africa Forest Ecosystem Programme), the largely French-funded project that aims to conserve West African forests. Starting in 1992, this resulted in the establishment of the 295 km^2 Obô Natural Park, covering the most mountainous and least accessible parts of both São Tomé and Príncipe (*c.*30% of the country), and other related initiatives. Although all land belongs to the government (a legacy of the previous socialist regime), the park's status is still fragile, the law creating it being issued only in 2006. The zoning and management plan of the park were being prepared in 2008, when the first directors were appointed, but the park still lacks sufficient personnel and means to enforce the law. Agricultural encroachment is evident in more accessible parts of the park such as Bom Sucesso, whilst hunting is widespread.

With an only recent opening for free enterprises (Seibert 2002), cocoa, coffee and oil palm exports from São Tomé are to date limited. Much of the economy is at subsistence level; small-scale farming is widespread and extractive activities such as the harvesting of palm-wine and hunting of pigeons, introduced monkeys and pigs are locally important (Carvalho 2008). These occur wherever forest can be accessed. During our stay, large numbers of


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people were harvesting palm-wine and hunting in the Formoso Grande / Bombaim area, which was crisscrossed by heavily used trails (some to the point of eroding) and some shelters had been built even inside the park. The same was true of the Bruné area, adjacent to Juliana de Sousa and also part of the Obô park.

Hunting is a widespread, unregulated and socially accepted activity (Carvalho 2008), and hunters were met frequently in the Obô park, including within the environs of Lagoa Amélia and the trail to Pico de São Tomé. Although subsistence hunters prefer feral pigs and Mona Monkeys *Cercopithecus mona*, larger birds like Dwarf Olive Ibises and pigeons are also taken. Also, several commercial hunters harvest pigeons using airguns to supply urban consumers. On most of the trails small piles of feathers (mostly from São Tomé Green and Bronze-naped Pigeons but, at Juliana de Sousa, also São Tomé Pigeons) and spent shotgun cartridges were easily found.

The abundance of harvested and threatened species on both Príncipe and São Tomé is negatively correlated with distance from roads and trails (Dallimer & King 2007, Dallimer *et al.* 2009). The effect of hunting on species such as the ibis is obvious and might explain the species' absence from Lagoa Amélia, but more subtle effects from the presence of people must affect species that are not directly exploited, for example the fiscal, short-tail and grosbeak.

Monte Carmo harbours all of the threatened endemics, including surprising numbers of ibises. The area (sometimes called Ribeira Peixe) has been considered a priority site for conservation action by the BirdLife International partnership. BirdLife has supported the establishment and staff training of a local NGO, Associação dos Biólogos Sãotomenses (ABS) as a country partner, whilst ABS has already undertaken a broad survey of ibis distribution (ABS 2007) and has commenced monitoring all of the Critically Endangered species at Monte Carmo by employing field assistants from the local community. Further activities are planned to promote the conservation of the area, part of the buffer zone of the Obô park, including awareness campaigns targeting local people.

Monte Carmo is probably the most accessible site where all of the threatened endemics can be found and is already a well-known destination for birders. An international workshop to promote ecotourism in São Tomé and Príncipe held in February 2008 listed birding as an activity to be encouraged and specifically mentioned Monte Carmo as a site for a pilot project. In July 2009 ABS promoted a short course for training bird guides to work in Monte Carmo and it is hoped that this initiative will bear fruit and be supported by the birdwatching community.

However, Monte Carmo faces pressure from neighbouring communities. The lowlands adjoining the forested slopes are occupied by the old oil-palm plantations of EMOLVE. Once the main supplier of cooking oil for the country prior to independence, the plantations subsequently entered a period of decline, with only limited renovation since. The plantations are home to some 500 people, who lack access to electricity or treated water. The oil-processing plant currently employs just 30 persons, half of them on a part-time basis, down from some 400 a few decades ago. The result is that large numbers of people are engaged in palm-wine harvesting, hunting and other extractive activities, signs of which are evident in the core of Monte Carmo.

São Tomé and Príncipe faces daunting problems associated with poverty and an increasing population, now estimated at *c.*156,000 people, etching a living in a very limited land area (Leventis & Olmos 2009, Dallimer *et al.* 2009). The post-independence regime oversaw the collapse of most of the commercial plantations that the economy was reliant upon, and a move to food crops for the local market and extractive activities. This is now changing as the current government seeks to restore the country's agricultural potential, with direct impacts at Monte Carmo.

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Figure 2. **(a)** Newton's Sunbird / Souimanga de Newton *Anabathmis newtoni;* **(b)** Giant Sunbird / Souimanga de São Tomé *Dreptes thomensis*; **(c)** São Tomé White-eye / Zostérops becfigue *Zosterops* (*ficedulinus*) *feae*; **(d)** São Tomé Speirops / Zostérops de São Tomé *Zosterops lugubris*; **(e)** São Tomé Chestnut-winged Starling / Rufipenne de forêt *Onychognathus fulgidus fulgidus*; **(f)** São Tomé Seedeater / Serin roux *Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis*; **(g)** São Tomé Weaver / Tisserin de São Tomé *Ploceus sanctithomae*; **(h)** Male Giant Weaver / Tisserin géant *Ploceus grandis* (Fábio Olmos)

In June 2009 the plantations were ceded by the government (which owns all land in the country) to the French-Belgian-Luxembourg Socfinal company, which owns oil-palm plantations in Africa and Indonesia. According to the local press, Socfinal plans to restore *c.*2,000 ha of plantations on the south coast of São Tomé, which could either result in greater local employment and fewer people engaged in hunting and other damaging activities, or more people moving to the area being attracted by possible jobs, with more substantial impacts on the forest and its threatened birds. The outcome will largely depend on policies adopted by the plantation's managers.

Also in mid 2009, a similar concession to a Libyan group was announced for the Monte Café plantation, near Bom Sucesso and site of an undocumented grosbeak sighting (Simpson 2002). As the business environment in the country improves and investors' interest increases, it is probable that more initiatives of this nature will appear, almost certainly resulting in *capoeiras* being turned into plantations and potentially resulting in increasing pressure on natural areas if expansion is deemed profitable. A real threat is that small-scale producers of food crops will be dislodged, with further encroachment into the park resulting, as is already occurring in the Bom Sucesso area.

The sustainability of conservation initiatives in São Tomé and Príncipe is a real issue. The country still lacks a critical mass of trained conservation professionals and NGOs rely entirely on external support. Furthermore, it is uncertain if projects such as ECOFAC will leave an enduring legacy when funding is removed. On the other hand, new actors are forcing changes that, for good or worse, will affect the country's endemic and threatened species. The outcome remains uncertain.

Acknowledgements

Peter Jones and Will Cresswell made important suggestions on an earlier draft of his paper. Our work would have been impossible without the support of the A. P. Leventis Conservation Foundation. Nigel Collar proffered continuous encouragement and helped unravel many problems. Bastien Loloum 'navigated' us through many local issues in São Tomé and Principe. We also acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Faustino Oliveira, Alzira Rodriques, Luiz Mario Almeida, Antonio Alberto, Pedro Leitão and all those who contributed in one way or the other to our survey. Finally, we thank Rita Souza and Ruth Ndam for their understanding while we were away.

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Corrigenda

Bull. ABC 16 (1)

In the report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee, the captions for Figs. 6 and 7 on p. 34 should be reversed.

In Salewski *et al.*'s paper on the search for the winter quarters of the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, the person holding the Aquatic Warbler in Fig. 3 on p. 63 is Indega Bindia, not Ibrahima Gueye.

Bull. ABC 16 (2)

In the reportage concerning the Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* survey, on p. 138, the area of potentially suitable habitat in the Mabla Mts. should have read 4.3 km^2.

In Louette & Hasson's paper on the rediscovery of the Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, the reference 'Craig 2004' on p. 169 should be replaced by 'Oschadleus 2004a', and on p. 172 by 'Oschadleus 2004b'. In the reference list, the entry 'Craig, A. J. F. K. 2004. *Ploceus ruweti*. In Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. (eds.) *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 7. London, UK: Christopher Helm' should thus be replaced by:

Oschadleus, D. 2004a. *Ploceus ruweti*. In Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. (eds.) *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 7. London, UK: Christopher Helm.

Oschadleus, D. 2004b. *Ploceus velatus*. In Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. (eds.) *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 7. London, UK: Christopher Helm.

The lark shown in Recent Reports on p. 234, Fig. 2, is not Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*, but Foxy Lark *M. alopex*. The Kenya record of Friedmann's Lark of 17 May 2009, mentioned on p. 232, is thus also erroneous. See the Photospot in this issue for a discussion of the identification features of both species.

First records of eight bird species for Eritrea

Jason Anderson

Première mention de huit espèces d'oiseaux pour l'Éritrée. Huit additions à l'avifaune de l'Éritrée, observées en octobre 2007–avril 2009, sont documentées. Il s'agit des espèces suivantes : l'Érismature maccoa *Oxyura maccoa*, le Courvite somalien *Cursorius somalensis*, le Pigeon rameron *Columba arquatrix*, le Grand-duc du Cap *Bubo capensis*, l'Engoulevent d'Abyssinie *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*, la Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara*, le Traquet familier *Cercomela familiaris* et la Locustelle tachetée *Locustella naevia*. Quatre d'entre elles sont présumées être des résidents, deux sont vraisemblablement des migrateurs locaux, une est probablement occasionnelle, tandis que la dernière est un migrateur paléarctique. Trois espèces ont été vues à deux occasions séparées et une, l'Érismature maccoa, a été notée sept fois en quatre localités différentes, indiquant qu'il s'agit probablement d'un colonisateur récent, qui a étendu son aire de distribution vers le nord à partir de l'Éthiopie.

Summary. Eight additions to Eritrea's bird list, recorded in the period October 2007–April 2009, are documented: Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*, Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis*, African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*, Cape Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis*, Montane Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*, Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*, Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris* and Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*. Of these, four are presumed residents, two are likely to be local migrants, one is probably a vagrant and one is a Palearctic migrant. Three species were seen on two separate occasions and one, Maccoa Duck, was recorded seven times at four different localities, indicating that it is probably a recent colonist, having expanded its range north from Ethiopia.

From September 2007 to June 2009 I lived in Adi Keyih, a town in the south of the Eritrean highlands. During this time I recorded eight new species for the country, which are documented here. Some of these have already been included in Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2009). As I spent most of my time in and around Adi Keyih, unsurprisingly six of these species were recorded in the vicinity of the town, which lies *c.*35 km north of the Ethiopian border. The other two were found in Eritrea's only remaining extensive forest area, Filfil, in the centre of the country.

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

On 25 April 2008 at *c.*16.00 hrs, on a small reservoir near the village of Hawatsu (14°53'48"N 39°20'55"E) at 2,300 m, *c.*10 km from Adi Keyih, I observed four unusual ducks, *c.*50 m distant. Given their close proximity and the lack of confusion species, it was easy to identify them as Maccoa Ducks, despite the absence of males in breeding plumage. They had a pale stripe below the eye, which contrasted with the overall dark brown plumage, and a stiff tail, diagnostic in sub-Saharan Africa of this species. The bill was dark. I took several photos, in which the key features can be seen.

Subsequently, I recorded the species on six other occasions (Table 1; Fig. 1). These records indicate that Maccoa Duck is widespread in the Eritrean highlands and present year-round, although I did not observe evidence of breeding. It is probable that, with the increasing number of reservoirs, Maccoa Duck has extended its range north from Ethiopia, colonising Eritrea in recent years. As other reservoirs are planned, other waterbirds might also extend their range north into Eritrea in the near future.

Table 1. Records of Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* in Eritrea, 2008–09

Tableau 1. Mentions de l'Érismature maccoa *Oxyura maccoa* en Éritrée, 2008–09

Date	Locality / Localité	Number / Nombre
25 Apr 2008	Small reservoir near Hawatsu	4
10 May 2008	Afoma Reservoir, near Senafe	2; 1 ♂ breeding plumage (br.)
2 Jul 2008	Tseaziga Reservoir, near Tsada Christian	1 ♂ br.
21 Jul 2008	Adi Nfas Reservoir, near Asmara	8–9; at least 4 ♂ br.
1 Sep 2008	Acria Reservoir, near Asmara	2; 1 ♂ br.
25 Jan 2009	Adi Nfas Reservoir, near Asmara	1 non-br.
14 Feb 2009	Afoma Reservoir, near Senafe	5; 2 ♂ coming into br.

Figure 1. Male Maccoa Duck / Érismature maccoa *Oxyura maccoa*, Acria Reservoir, near Asmara, 1 September 2008 (J. Anderson)

Figure 2. African Olive Pigeon / Pigeon rameron *Columba arquatrix*, Karibosa (S. Ferwerda)

Figure 3. Cape Eagle Owl / Grand-duc du Cap *Bubo capensis dillonii*, Adi Keyih, Eritrea, April 2008 (J. Anderson)

Figure 4. Montane Nightjar / Engoulevent d'Abyssinie *Caprimulgus poliocephalus* (sex unconfirmed), Abi Girat, Eritrea, 25 February 2009 (J. Anderson)

Figure 5. Adult Mountain Wagtail / Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara*, Adi Keyih, Eritrea, 21 October 2007 (J. Anderson)

Figure 6. Juvenile Mountain Wagtail / Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara*, Adi Keyih, Eritrea, 21 October 2007 (J. Anderson)

Figure 7. Grasshopper Warbler / Locustelle tachetée *Locustella naevia*, Sabur, near Filfil, Eritrea, 26 January 2009 (J. Anderson)

Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis*

On 6 March 2008, at 07.10 hrs I was passing on my motorbike near the village of Mealewia (14°49'13"N 39°21'50"E), *c.*3 km south-west of Adi Keyih, at 2,400 m. Approximately 20 m from the road, on some ploughed but barren land I noticed a courser. I observed it through binoculars from a distance of *c.*20 m and made field notes. The bird's overall coloration was beige, and it had a clear black eye-stripe, a white supercilium, a dark grey crown and a white belly/vent, obviously paler than the breast. The bill was black and the legs pale grey. I twice flushed the bird and on both occasions clearly saw its pale inner wing, which is diagnostic of Somali Courser, Cream-coloured Courser *C. cursor* having an all-dark underwing. Subsequent visits to the same spot did not produce any more sightings, either that day, or on the following two days.

This is the first documented record of Somali Courser for Eritrea. An unpublished trip list by K. Harte and D. Berhane from December 2004 mentions a record of four Somali Coursers in the Eritrean coastal lowlands near Foro, *c.*50 km from Adi Keyih at sea level. D. Berhane (pers. comm.) informed me that he was unaware at the time that the species had not previously been recorded in Eritrea, and that he did not possess any field notes to confirm the identification.

The nearest confirmed sightings are from the north-eastern lowlands of Ethiopia and just across the border in Djibouti, *c.*400 km south-east of my sighting (Ash & Atkins 2009). The Eritrean records indicate that the species occasionally occurs significantly further north of its usual range and could conceivably occur alongside Cream-coloured Courser. However, the high altitude of my bird is atypical, suggesting a vagrant.

African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*

On 26 January 2008 at 09.20 hrs, I was birdwatching near Filfil Solomuna, in the vicinity of the Medhanit Recreation Centre (15°37'01"N 38°56'07"E) at 1,000 m, in the middle of Eritrea's largest remaining tract of tropical forest. In a mature broad-leaved tree I observed a large pigeon with a dark head, yellow eye-ring, yellow bill, purple-grey on the wing and mantle, pale spots / mottling on the breast, and yellow feet. These features are diagnostic of African Olive Pigeon. The bird was only visible for *c.*30 seconds before it disappeared into denser forest. I remained in the area for another three days, frequently returning to the same spot, but did not see the bird again.

On 14 February 2008 at 11.35 hrs, I was walking with two colleagues through riparian woodland at Karibosa, near Adi Keyih (14°54'42"N 39°25'12"E; *c.*100 km south of the first sighting) at 2,500 m, when I observed another African Olive Pigeon in a broad-leaved tree, *c.*5 m above me. We watched the bird for 5–7 minutes in excellent conditions and one of my colleagues took several photographs (Fig. 2).

These two sightings extend this pigeon's range north significantly, the nearest confirmed records being from 500 km further south, in Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009), although the species has recently also been discovered slightly nearer, in Djibouti (Redman *et al.* 2009). The species is probably resident in small numbers in isolated patches of mature woodland in Eritrea.

Cape Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis*

On 1 April 2008, when I was visiting a school in Adi Keyih (14°51'14"N 39°22'07"E), at 2,400 m, I noticed a group of children surrounding a boy who was carrying a large owl. It transpired that he had bought the bird from a person who had found it injured on the ground close to a nearby village. I took the owl home and kept it alive for several days. The humerus of the left wing was completely broken close to the body.

The bright yellow-orange eyes separated it from all other large owls except Desert Eagle Owl *B. ascalaphus*. The overall darkness of the plumage, very heavy mottling on the upper breast and strong mottling on the belly identified it as Cape Eagle Owl (Fig. 3). Its length was 50 cm. The race present in Ethiopia (and presumably that involved here) is *dillonii*, which is sometimes treated with *B. c. mackinderi* (of Mozambique to Kenya) as a separate species, Mackinder's Eagle Owl *Bubo mackinderi*. The Natural History Museum at Tring possesses a specimen of Cape Eagle Owl collected in Senafe, Abyssinia, in 1868 (BMNH 1887.11.11.24), which is erroneously mentioned as a Desert Eagle Owl in Ash & Atkins (2009), leaving just one confirmed record for the latter species in Eritrea. As Senafe is in present-day Eritrea, the specimen becomes the first confirmed record of Cape Eagle Owl for the country, the record documented here being the second.

Although the nearest confirmed records are from central Ethiopia, 600 km to the south, there are also four uncertain records from northern Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009). It seems likely that the species is a rare resident in Eritrea, and possibly also in northern Ethiopia.

Montane Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*
On 25 February 2009, at *c.*13.00 hrs, I flushed a nightjar from the ground near the village of Abi Girat, near Adi Keyih (14°53'33"N 39°22'00"E) at 2,200 m, along a lightly wooded stream in a small, quite barren valley with some small *Acacia abyssinica* and Prickly Pear *Opuntia ficus-indica*. The bird settled *c.*7 m away, and I took several photographs (Fig. 4). The only features I noticed were the rather dark overall coloration, a prominent chestnut collar, and several cream spots on the wing-coverts. It seemed similar in size to Dusky Nightjar *C. frenatus*, a species I had positively identified nearby, and I initially suspected that it was that species. When the bird flew off, it showed clear white wing spots, but I did not notice the tail pattern. When I tried to relocate the bird, I was only successful in flushing it again, whereupon it emitted a monosyllabic call twice in quick succession, *kwa-kwa*. It flew a little further away and, despite extensive searching, I was unable to find the bird again. Subsequent analysis of the photographs revealed the bird to be a Montane Nightjar.

Two months later, on 25 April 2009 at *c.*11.30hrs, I was birdwatching with D. Berhane at Karibosa, near Adi Keyih (14°54'49"N 39°25'18"E) at 2,500 m, when he flushed another Montane Nightjar from dense cover close to a dry riverbed. The bird settled on a branch, where we could take good-quality photographs. Comparison of these with two specimens at the Natural History Museum, Tring, collected near Lake Tana, in north-west Ethiopia (one male and one female), revealed that the plumage of the Eritrean birds was identical to that of the specimens.

Montane Nightjar is a rather uncommon resident in Ethiopia and the nearest confirmed record is from the Simien Mountains (Ash & Atkins 2009). Given the presence of suitable habitat in the southern Eritrean highlands, the species had long been suspected to occur. It is probably resident there, extending the species' range *c.*200 km northwards.

Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*
On 21 October 2007 at 14.30 hrs, I was birdwatching in the Maka stream gorge near Adi Keyih (14°51'52"N 39°23'13"E) at 2,300 m. Following heavy rains, the stream was flowing well and I came across three wagtails that seemed quite different to White Wagtail *M. alba*, which is a common Palearctic migrant in the area. All three had a plain grey head and mantle, and dark wing feathers narrowly edged white. Two birds had a slim, dark 'V'-shaped breast-band, but this was absent on the third, which followed the other two. All three birds frequently uttered short sharp contact calls. I watched them for *c.*20 minutes, following them downstream, and took several poor-quality photographs, which confirm their identity as Mountain Wagtails (Figs. 5–6). The third bird's lack of breast-band indicates it was a juvenile. Whilst confusion with juvenile White Wagtail is possible, I observed the key features of Mountain Wagtail (narrow white supercilium, no black moustachial stripe, no white on the median coverts, very long tail).

This is the first record of Mountain Wagtail for Eritrea. The species is common in northern Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009), making it unsurprising that it ranges slightly into Eritrea. However, despite checking the same stream regularly during the next two years, I did not see the species there again. In 2008 the rains were not as heavy and the water level was much lower. Mountain Wagtail may be a local migrant, appearing, and possibly breeding, in Eritrea only after heavy rains.

Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris*
On 12 October 2007 at 16.00 hrs, close to the village of Safira, near Adi Keyih (14°51'18"N 39°24'19"E) at 2,550 m, in an area of open scrub with large boulders, I spotted a small passerine pursuing insects 10–15 m away. The bird, which was constantly flicking its wings and bobbing its tail, was drab brown overall and had a brownish-rufous rump and outer tail with a 'T'-shaped dark central band and tail end. The slender, horizontal jizz did not match Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* or Black Redstart *P. ochruros*, both of which I know well, and the underparts were also too pale for either. I observed the bird for *c.*5 minutes before it flew off and identified it as a Familiar Chat. Despite extensive observation,

I did not notice the rufous mask described and illustrated in Sinclair & Ryan (2003); instead, the head appeared uniformly brown.

Exactly one year later, on 12 October 2008, I encountered the species again, feeding in a dry streambed in a rocky valley several kilometres south of the original sighting. I attempted to take a photograph, but the bird flew off and I failed to relocate it.

These are the first records for Eritrea of Familiar Chat, whose Ethiopian range extends right up to the Eritrean border. My sightings thus extend the species' range only slightly but they are from a higher altitude than those in Ethiopia (1,090–2,000 m: Ash & Atkins 2009). I visited both sites regularly thereafter, but did not find the species again. Possibly Familiar Chat is a local migrant, with some birds moving north after the rainy season: both sightings were made in mid October, following the rains, when insects are most plentiful.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

On 26 January 2009 at 11.30 hrs, near Sabur Recreation Centre, Filfil Solomuna (*c.*15°36'N 38°55'E), at *c.*1,300–1,400 m, in an area of open, ungrazed meadows on a steep hillside with small bushes, surrounded by broadleaf woodland, I separately flushed two small brown birds from the 20–80 cm high grass. Both dived into small bushes nearby. I was unable to relocate the first bird, but the second remained for 20 minutes in a very small bush, which I approached to within 10 m. Immediately, I noticed diagnostic dark markings on the pale undertail-coverts, as the bird cocked its tail and turned away. I also noted the generally brown upperparts with black streaking on the mantle, crown and wings, slight streaking on the breast below a pale throat, and dark face with no clear supercilium. These features are consistent with Grasshopper Warbler. I obtained several reasonable photographs, which confirm the bird's identity (Fig. 7).

I suspect that the other bird I flushed, as well as a third I briefly saw the same day, were also Grasshopper Warblers. Possibly the area is a wintering ground for this Palearctic migrant. (See also Anderson & Berhane (submitted) for more about the importance of this site.) There are no previous records in Eritrea of Grasshopper Warbler, which is an uncommon winter visitor to Ethiopia, with only 13 records mentioned by Ash & Atkins (2009).

Note

This paper originally also included a record of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* from Mai Nefe Reservoir, near Asmara (15°15'34"N 38°47'47"E) on 3 February 2009. Recently, however, two records of Great Cormorant have been published, albeit undated (De Marchi *et al.* 2009). Giuseppe De Marchi (pers. comm.) informed me that these concerned a dead bird on NN045 Island in Howakil Bay on 30 December 2002 and a live bird in shallow water in the Gulf of Zula on 7 January 2006. My record from Mai Nefe thus becomes the third confirmed record of Great Cormorant in Eritrea.

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Recent bird records from Fogo, Cape Verde Islands

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Observations récentes de Fogo, Îles du Cap-Vert. Des données sont présentées concernant 12 espèces d'oiseaux observées à Fogo, Îles du Cap-Vert, parmi lesquelles deux premières mentions pour l'île (Chevalier gambette *Tringa totanus* et Hirondelle de fenêtre *Delichon urbicum*), les premières données de nidification du Martinet du Cap-Vert *Apus alexandri* et les premières observations fiables du Phaéton à bec rouge *Phaethon aethereus* indiquant la nidification probable de celui-ci. Des informations sont également présentées sur d'autres taxons mal connus à Fogo, tels que certaines espèces pélagiques et l'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba detorta*.

Summary. We present data on 12 bird species observed on Fogo, Cape Verde Islands, among them two first records for the island (Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*), the first breeding records of Cape Verde Swift *Apus alexandri* and the first reliable observations of Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* indicating probable breeding. Information on other taxa poorly known on Fogo, such as some pelagic seabirds and Barn Owl *Tyto alba detorta*, is also given.

Fogo, one of the Cape Verde Islands, is situated in the leeward group ('Ilhas do Sotavento'), *c.*724 km from the African continent. With a surface area of 478 km^2, the highest peak (Pico Novo) reaches 2,829 m (Michell-Thomé 1976). Its landscape is characterised by an active volcano (which last erupted in April 1995) and an impressive caldera rim *c.*1,000-m high, a rugged coast with vertical cliffs that rise up to 200 m, many small and medium-sized volcanoes, lava plains and a few steep gorges. Large areas are cultivated and/or used as pasture. The remaining original vegetation is mainly confined to the 'Bordeira' and 'Chã das Caldeiras' areas, in cliffs and gorges and in volcanic badlands (see Ribeiro 1954, Mitchell-Thomé 1976, Diniz & Matos 1987, Correia 1996, Day *et al.* 1999, Leyens 2002, Olehowski *et al.* 2008 and Foeken *et al.* 2009 for more information on the geology, geography, climate and vegetation).

Few ornithologists have studied the avifauna of this island. Among them are Leonardo Fea (*in* Salvadori 1899), José G. Correia (*in* Murphy 1924), de Naurois (1969, 1987, 1994), Jaime Vieira dos Santos (*in* Frade 1976), Nørrevang & Hartog (1984), de Bruyn & Koedijk (1990), Hazevoet (1995, 1998, 2003), Barone (1997), Geniez & López-Jurado (1998), Ratcliffe *et al.* (2000), Jens Hering (Hering & Hering 2005, Hering 2008, Hering & Fuchs 2008, 2009) and Jesus *et al.* (2009).

During five ornithological trips to Fogo in 2004–06, we observed several bird species not reported previously, and some others for which there are only a limited number of observations. Local information on breeding birds was mainly collected by RB. Dates of our visits are as follows: 18–21 October 2004 (JH & H. Hering), 5–10 February 2005 (RB), 18–29 September 2005 (RB), 28–30 December 2005 and 4–5 January 2006 (JH & H. Hering) and 19 October–1 November 2006 (JH & E. Fuchs). Information on the Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (Hering & Hering 2005, Hering 2008, Hering & Fuchs 2008, 2009) and the diet of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (Siverio *et al.* 2008) has been published elsewhere.

Methods

RB carried out a total of 24 diurnal point counts of 20–60 minutes (both visual and aural, three of them repeated 2–4 times), in different habitats across the island (sea cliffs, lowland xerophytic vegetation, cultivation, inland cliffs, gorges and high-mountain vegetation), largely following the recommendations of Bibby *et al.* (1992). Observations focused on seabirds, herons, raptors, swifts and some passerines, using both binoculars and a telescope. In addition, 14 gorges and inland cliffs, suitable as habitat for diurnal raptors and Barn Owl, were explored, and random walks in the lower, middle and higher parts of the island were performed. These were complemented by five nocturnal listening stations of 20 minutes (one of them repeated four times) in the Mosteiros area, Bangaeira (Chã das Caldeiras) and the main

town, São Filipe, aimed at detecting pelagic seabirds approaching land and Barn Owls. JH focused his attention mainly on the Cape Verde Cane Warbler, conducting listening point counts and line transects to detect the species during its breeding season (see Hering & Hering 2005, Hering 2008, Hering & Fuchs 2008, 2009).

Results and Discussion

We have selected data on 12 species observed on Fogo, including two new island records of migrants (Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*) and observations concerning breeding taxa, namely Cape Verde Swift *Apus alexandri* (first breeding records for the island), Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (first reliable observations), several pelagic seabirds and Barn Owl *Tyto alba detorta*.

Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae*

At least one was seen flying over open sea, more than 500 m off Mosteiros, in the north of the island, by RB on 6 February 2005, at 16.20–16.25 hrs. Two were seen from the same site, at 17.20–17.55 hrs the next day.

This species breeds at several localities on Fogo, mainly in the Chã das Caldeiras area above 1,600 m (Hazevoet 1995, Ratcliffe *et al.* 2000, Jesus *et al.* 2009), but there are few published sightings from adjacent seas. We were informed of a previously unknown colony on Monte Vaca, on the west side of the island, but it was not possible to verify this. Following recent genetic and morphometric studies, the nominate Cape Verdes' population has been proposed as a species different from the birds of Bugio, in the Desertas Islands, Madeira, which are now referred to as *P. deserta* in some literature (Jesus *et al.* 2009).

Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*

Six were observed flying at sea late in the evening of 18 September 2005 from Porto de Vale dos Cavaleiros, in the west of the island. In the afternoon of 20 September 2005, two were seen flying *c.*500 m off Mosteiros, with at least three on 21 September. We obtained reliable local information about the breeding of this species on the marine cliffs below Corvo, in the north-east. At Alcatraz, in the south-east, we saw some possible breeding sites, indicated by droppings at the entrance of several crevices in the marine cliffs, on 24 September 2005.

Despite the fact that Fogo possesses many seemingly suitable breeding sites, there are no breeding records of Cape Verde Shearwater (de Naurois 1994, Hazevoet 1995). This is likely due to the lack of a detailed inspection of its sea cliffs. Bourne (1955) included this species in his list of birds of the islands as it had been 'reported by a reliable inhabitant'.

Cape Verde Little Shearwater *Puffinus (assimilis) boydi*

On several occasions on 5–8 February and 20–23 September 2005, we heard birds calling at night while approaching the cliffs behind Mosteiros, where there seems to be a breeding colony. Maximum number of contacts included ten heard between 19.45–22.15 hrs on 21 September, and 13 between 21.30–22.00 hrs on 22 September. At times, two birds were heard simultaneously, and sometimes males and females could be distinguished due to their different vocalisations, as pointed out by James & Robertson (1985) for *Puffinus* (*assimilis*) *baroli* and by Robb *et al.* (2008) for the Cape Verdean endemic. Calls were clearly different from those of *P.* (*a.*) *baroli* (*cf.* Robb *et al.* 2008). During the late afternoon of 21 September 2005, one or two birds were observed at sea off Mosteiros.

The same locality is mentioned by Hazevoet (1995), who heard several birds there in April 1990. The only known breeding records are from Ilhéu de Cima, Branco, Raso, Santiago and Boavista islands (Hazevoet 1995).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

Three, all apparently adults, were seen approaching the coastal cliffs of Ponta Lenha–Baia da Reconhição, in the south-west (near 'Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Socorro'), in the afternoon of 19 September 2005 by RB. One entered a hole in the basaltic cliffs, but left after four minutes; later the same or another individual visited a different cavity and stayed longer. These observations may indicate breeding at this locality.

To date, Red-billed Tropicbird had not been definitely reported on Fogo, although it had occasionally been observed close to the coast

(T. Leyens pers. comm.) and Bourne (1955) mentioned it for the island based on information by a 'reliable inhabitant'. Breeding has been confirmed on Sal, Boavista, Santiago and Brava, and on Raso and Rombos islets (Hazevoet 1995, 1998), and it probably breeds on Santo Antão as well (Palacios & Barone 2001, Hazevoet 2003). It has been observed recently on Ilhéu dos Pássaros, São Vicente (Hazevoet 2010).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

We found a roost of this species in a tree at Mosteiros. On 5 February 2005 there were *c.*125 birds, with 152 there the next day between 17.50–18.55 hrs. In September 2005 there were no Cattle Egrets at all on the island, and in December 2005 and October 2006 only small numbers were recorded, the maximum being 12, south of Mosteiros, on 19 October.

This egret is present in the Cape Verdes mainly in December–April (Hazevoet 1995), with some breeding records from Santiago in the 1960s (Bannerman & Bannerman 1968, de Naurois 1969). Our roost seems to be one of the largest in the archipelago, although 540 birds were counted near the sewage farm of São Vicente on 9–10 March 1996 (Hazevoet 1997). A roost of 1,344 birds was found on Santiago in March 2008 and a breeding colony containing *c.*60 nests occurred on Boavista in 2004 (Hazevoet 2010).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

One flew above the coastal cliffs of Fajãzinha, north-west of Mosteiros, on 7 February 2005, an immature was seen above Mosteiros on 20 September 2005, and another bird along the shore at Mosteiros, on 24 and 29 October 2006.

Hazevoet (1995) mentioned the existence of <10 records from Fogo, Santo Antão and Sal, but there has been an increase in observations on the last two islands during the past decade and even some breeding records on Santo Antão (Hazevoet 1997, Barone & Delgado 1999, Palacios & Barone 2001, Hazevoet 2003). Fogo does not offer suitable habitat for this heron, which prefers coastal plains and lagoons.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Two were observed on a dark sandy beach close to Porto de Vale dos Cavaleiros on 18 September

Legend to figures on opposite page

Figure 1. Satellite image of Fogo Island, Cape Verde Islands, with the main localities cited in the text (modified after a NASA photograph).

Image satellite de l'île de Fogo, Îles du Cap-Vert, avec les principales localités citées dans le texte (modifiée d'après une photo de la NASA).

Figure 2. Fajãzinha, in the north of Fogo; one of the best places for waders on the island (R. Barone)

Fajãzinha, dans le nord de Fogo ; un des meilleurs endroits de l'île pour les limicoles (R. Barone)

Figure 3. Small canyon between Fajãzinha and Sambango; within its interior two nests of Cape Verde Swift *Apus alexandri* were discovered (R. Barone)

Petit canyon entre Fajãzinha et Sambango, où deux nids du Martinet du Cap-Vert *Apus alexandri* ont été découverts (R. Barone)

Figure 4. Mosteiros: from the coast several pelagic seabirds were seen and in the cliffs behind the town Cape Verde Little Shearwater *Puffinus* (*assimilis*) *boydi* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba detorta* were heard (J. Hering)

Mosteiros : plusieurs espèces d'oiseaux pélagiques y ont été vus à partir de la côte, tandis que le Puffin semblable du Cap-Vert *Puffinus* (*assimilis*) *boydi* et l'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba detorta* ont été entendus dans les falaises derrière la ville (J. Hering)

Figure 5. Pai António is one of the main tropical agriculture areas in the Cape Verde Islands. Barn Owl *Tyto alba detorta* was found at this site, which is one of the most important for Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* in the archipelago (J. Hering)

Pai António est une des zones principales d'agriculture tropicale dans les Îles du Cap-Vert. L'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba detorta* a été trouvée sur ce site, qui est un des plus importants de l'archipel pour la Rousserolle du Cap-Vert *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (J. Hering)

Figure 6. Partial view of the caldera rim of Chã das Caldeiras, situated in the centre of the island, with two villages, Portela and Bangaeira, at its base. This is one of the most important breeding sites of Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* (J. Hering)

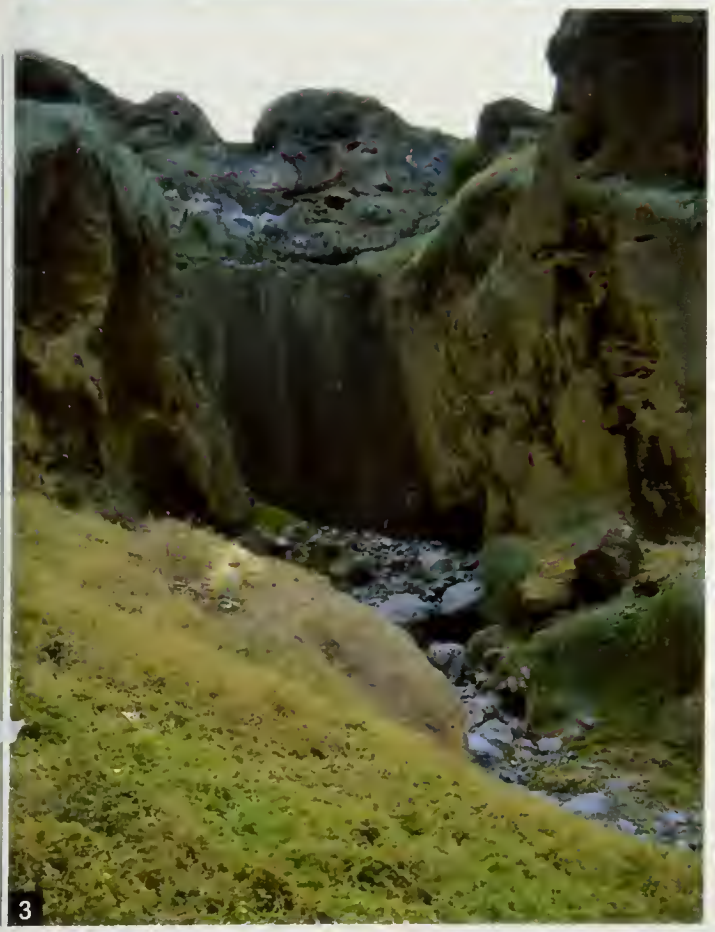
Vue partielle du bord de la caldera de Chã das Caldeiras, située au centre de l'île, avec deux villages, Portela et Bangaeira, à son pied. Ceci est un des sites de nidification les plus importants du Pétrel gongon *Pterodroma feae* (J. Hering)

Figure 7. Coastal cliffs close to Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Socorro, in the south-west, where Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* was observed (R. Barone)

Falaises près de Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Socorro, dans le sud-ouest, où le Phaéton à bec rouge *Phaethon aethereus* a été observé (R. Barone)


Sambango
Fajãzinha
Mosteiros
Ponta da Salina
Pai António
Corvo
Bangaeira
Portela
Mira-Mira
São Lourenço
P. Vale dos Cavaleiros
São Filipe
Nossa Sra. do Socorro
Alcatraz
1


2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2005. On 25 September, two, possibly the same birds, were on a similar beach between Porto de Vale dos Cavaleiros and São Filipe. Four were on Ponta da Salina on 30 December 2005 with a maximum of three on Porto de Vale dos Cavaleiros the same day.

This wader is more common on the eastern islands of Sal, Boavista and Maio (Hazevoet 1995, Barone & Delgado 1999, Barone *et al.* 2001), which possess extensive flat coastal habitats and lagoons, although it occurs locally throughout the archipelago. Our records suggest that Sanderling is probably a regular migrant visitor in small numbers on Fogo.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
An immature was observed at the shore of Fajãzinha on 21 September 2005.

This is the first record for Fogo. There are previous observations from São Vicente, Sal, Boavista, Maio and Santiago (Hazevoet 1995, Barone *et al.* 2001, Hazevoet 2003).

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
We have several records from different months, all of them along the northern shore. One east of Mosteiros and three at Fajãzinha on 6–7 February and 21 September 2005; three at Mosteiros on 29 December 2005, and one there next day; finally, two at Mosteiros on 24 October 2006, with three there five days later.

There are few published records for Fogo (Hazevoet 1995, Barone 1997). Our observations suggest that it is a regular migrant visitor to this island, as well as to the rest of the archipelago (Hazevoet 1995).

Cape Verde Barn Owl *Tyto alba detorta*
One was calling above Mosteiros at 23.36 hrs on 6 February 2005. The next day, we discovered two cavities used by the species on the Sambango volcano, in the north. The first, which contained bones of House Mouse *Mus musculus* and some insect remains, was old, but the second (situated at 20 m), where we collected *c.*20 pellets, was still in use. On 9 February we found five pellets at Ribeira Gomes, near Mira-Mira, on the west side of the island, at *c.*700 m (see Siverio *et al.* 2008 for analysis of the pellets). Other records include: a bird calling at night above Mosteiros, at the same place as in February, on 20 September 2005; a new pellet, containing many insect remains, found below the roost on Sambango on 21 September; one soaring in a cultivated area between Cova Lima and Cutelo Alto, in the north of the island, on 20 October 2006; one perched in daylight in a mango tree *Mangifera indica* at the outskirts of Pai António, in the north, and another on the roofs of the southern part of Mosteiros on 28 October. The diurnal search for the species in several gorges, small canyons and inland cliffs in some other northern (between Mosteiros and Fajãzinha), central (Chã das Caldeiras area) and western (São Filipe–São Lourenço) areas of the island was unsuccessful.

These data suggest that Barn Owl is a locally common species on Fogo, as also indicated by information obtained from local people. The only previous records were published by Hazevoet (1995), who saw it several times in June 1989 and April 1990, indicating its probable breeding on this island. Previously Bourne (1955) mentioned that the species was 'reported by a reliable inhabitant'. Our observations, especially the finding of fresh pellets and birds calling at night with territorial behaviour, are proof of its establishment on Fogo. To date, breeding of the Barn Owl has been confirmed on Santo Antão, Santa Luzia, Branco, Boavista, Maio, Santiago, Ilhéu Grande (Rombos) and Brava, but the species is also present on São Vicente, Raso and São Nicolau (Siverio *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, there is fossil evidence for its presence on Sal (Boessneck & Kinzelbach 1993).

Cape Verde Swift *Apus alexandri*
This endemic was observed in many localities, mainly over coastal and inland cliffs and steep gorges. It exhibited some nocturnal activity, as we heard one or two birds at night above Mosteiros on 6 February 2005, a behaviour also recorded in similar species like the Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* (Rodríguez 1988). The largest groups consisted of 20–21 birds at the cliffs near Porto de Vale dos Cavaleiros on 18 September 2005 and more than 100 at Chã das Caldeiras on 4 January 2006. However, the most interesting records concern the discovery of several nests. On 7 February 2005 three were seen approaching the cliffs west of Fajãzinha, one of which tried to enter a small hole, and a nest (probably in use, as it had droppings at the entrance) was discovered in the same area.

The same day, two other nests were found in a small canyon situated in the interior, at 60 m, between Fajãzinha and Sambango. One of them, at *c.*5 m height, was occupied, with another, at 3.5 m, nearby. Bones of Cape Verde Swift were found in Barn Owl pellets collected at Sambango in February 2005 (Siverio *et al.* 2008).

These are the first breeding records of Cape Verde Swift on Fogo. Previously, there were nesting data only for Brava and São Nicolau, but its breeding was considered likely on Santiago, Fogo and Santo Antão as well (Hazevoet 1995). Listed as breeding on all of the islands in the archipelago by de Naurois (1994).

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

One was observed near Bangaeira, in the Chã das Caldeiras area, on 5 January 2006 by JH.

Hazevoet (1995) mentioned that this species had not been reported from Fogo.

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The separate African winter quarters of Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*

Robert J. Dowsett

Le Gobemouche noir *Ficedula hypoleuca* et la Gobemouche à collier *F. albicollis* ont des quartiers d'hiver africains bien séparés. Goodenough *et al.* (2009) ont écrit que le Gobemouche noir *Ficedula hypoleuca* et son proche cousin le Gobemouche à collier *F. albicollis* hivernent en sympatrie dans des pays comme le Tchad et le Nigeria, mais c'est incorrect. Le Gobemouche noir hiverne principalement dans les forêts claires soudaniennes de la Sierra Leone au Cameroun, tandis que le Gobemouche à collier hiverne dans les forêts claires de la région zambézienne au sud de l'Equateur.

Summary. The claim that Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and its close relative the Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis* 'winter sympatrically in countries such as Chad and Nigeria' (Goodenough *et al.* 2009) is not true. Pied Flycatcher winters mainly in the Sudanian woodlands from Cameroon west to Sierra Leone, but Collared Flycatcher does so in the Zambezian woodlands south of the equator.

In their discussion of factors relevant to the conservation of Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Goodenough *et al.* (2009) claim that this species and its close relative the Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis* 'winter sympatrically in countries such as Chad and Nigeria (Dowsett 1993, Elgood *et al.* 1994)'. This is untrue, and is not what was shown by Dowsett (1993).

A literature search has produced many specimen and correctly identified sight records of *Ficedula* flycatchers in sub-Saharan Africa. To these have been added my own observations from several countries in which these two species occur in winter or on passage, from western Mali to northern Cameroon for Pied Flycatchers, and north-east Nigeria to southern Zambia for Collared Flycatchers.

Winter distribution of Pied and Collared Flycatchers

Goodenough *et al.* (2009) were perhaps influenced by the fact that Elgood *et al.* (1994) wrote of Collared Flycatcher in Nigeria 'uncommon... Sep–Mar', which implies a presence throughout that period. This echoed Elgood *et al.* (1966), who considered that it is 'probably a regular winter visitor'. However, the few records of Collared Flycatcher in Nigeria all fall between 13 September and 1 November, except for one bird which spent the period 23 February–25 March at Vom (Smith 1966). There is a handful of records from neighbouring Chad (11 September–19 October and 11–15 April: Salvan 1968). For both Nigeria and Chad, Dowsett (1993) made it clear that the species occurs only on passage.

Pied Flycatchers too are known only on passage through Chad (7 September to the first half of October and 29 March–10 April: Salvan 1968, Newby 1980), which is at the eastern limit of the species' migration. But they do winter in considerable numbers in Nigeria. Elgood *et al.* (1994) reported them between October and April, but extreme dates are in fact 17 September (Malamfatori, Lake Chad: Dowsett 1969) and 23 May (Vom: Smith 1966). Pied Flycatchers winter south in Nigeria from 11°N (Falgore, January: Wilkinson & Beecroft 1985; Zaria, 27 February: Fry 1965), mostly between 07°N and 10°N. There are few records from the coastal zone of Nigeria (e.g. Lagos: Forrester 1971, Gee & Heigham 1977). In its overall wintering area (essentially Cameroon west to Mali, south to Sierra Leone: Serle 1949; pers. obs.) the species frequents especially the Sudanian woodlands, less often clearings or the edge of forest. In the Sahel it occurs only on passage, and then there is a preponderance of autumn (southbound passage) records at several localities; e.g. at Malamfatori, at least 14 between 17 September and 9 October (Dowsett 1969), but only three on northbound passage (early April to 3 May: Dowsett 1968, Sharland 1969). In contrast, with the drying out of the Lake Chad area, Gustafsson *et al.* (2003) in the period 1997–2000 had only a single autumn record at Malamfatori (8 September), and none at all in spring. Near Jos (2001–09), M. Stevens (*in*

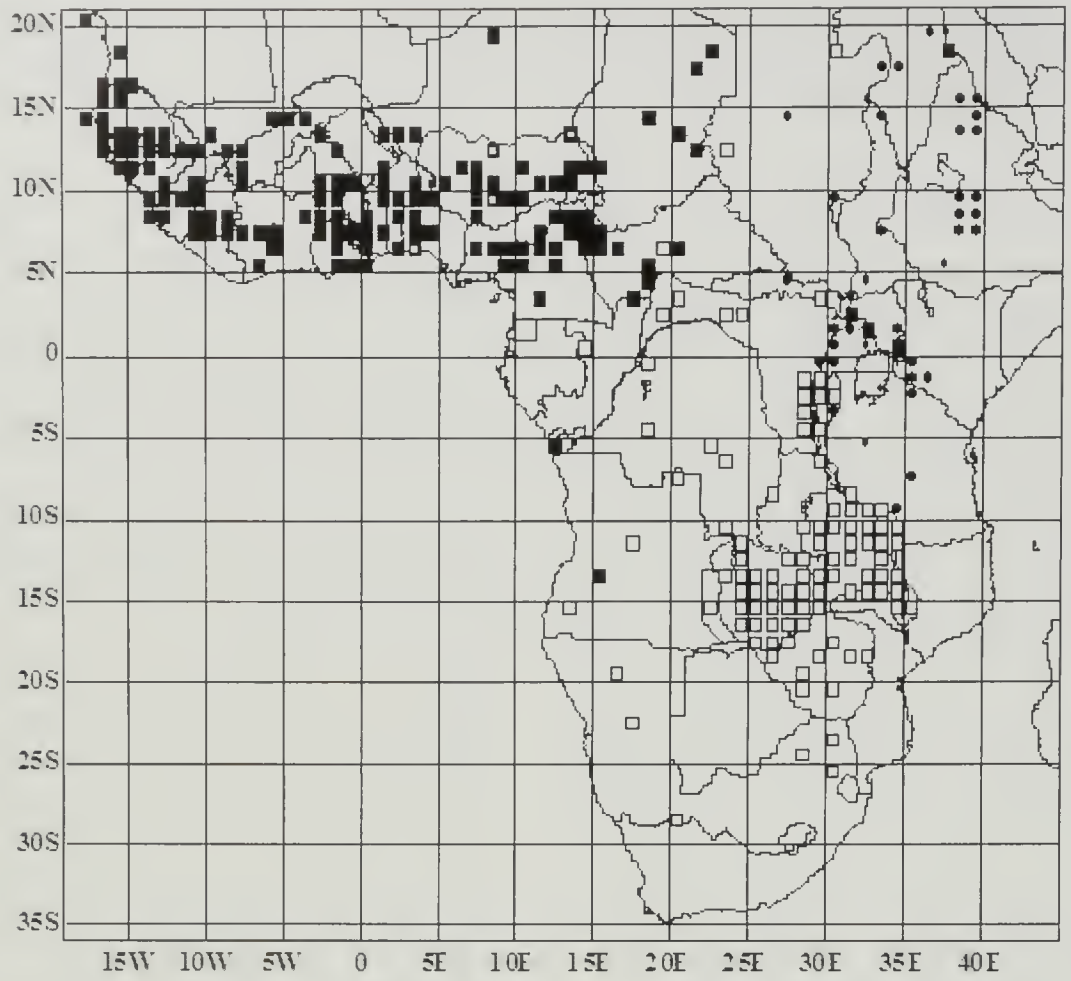

Figure 1. Records (mapped by degree square) of Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* (black squares), Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* (open squares) and Semi-collared Flycatchers *F. semitorquata* (black dots). Localities at which two species occur are denoted by 'pied' symbols.

Distribution (par carrés d'un degré de latitude-longitude) des Gobemouches noirs *Ficedula hypoleuca* (carrés noirs), à collier *F. albicollis* (carrés creux) et à demi-collier *F. semitorquata* (points noirs). Les localités où se rencontrent deux espèces sont indiquées par un symbole noir et blanc.

litt. 2009) ringed 100 in October compared to 45 in March–April.

In contrast to Pied Flycatchers, Collared Flycatchers winter south of the equator, in the Zambezian woodlands, centred on Zambia and Malawi in particular (Moreau 1972, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2006, Dowsett *et al.* 2008). Fig. 1 shows the distribution of these two species, and the separation of the centres of distribution is clear, with the Central African rain forest largely avoided. Records of Semi-collared Flycatchers *F. semitorquata* are also mapped; as they are difficult to separate, some records might have to be reassessed, but it does seem that their winter distribution is near the equator, centred on Uganda and western Kenya (e.g. Pearson 1998, and references therein).

Future workers are likely to be misled by the published statement in such an authoritative journal as *Ibis*, but the editor declined to publish this clarification there.

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First breeding record and passage of Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* in Libya

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Première mention de nidification et passage de l'Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* en Libye. La découverte est rapportée de deux nids occupés d'Éperviers d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* au nord-ouest de Cyrenaica, Libye, en mai 2008. Le premier était dans une plantation de pins au nord de Cyrene, près du complexe hôtelier de Muntasah Shahhat, le second environ 1,2 km au sud-ouest du premier, dans une zone clôturée ayant l'aspect d'un parc. Des plumées contenaient des plumes d'une Tourterelle des bois *Streptopelia turtur*, d'un Coucou gris *Cuculus canorus* et de 11 passereaux qui se trouvent dans la région comme espèces nicheuses ou de passage. Ceci constitue les premières mentions de nidification de l'Épervier d'Europe en Libye. Deux observations en mars 2009 à Wadi Ash Shati, les premières pour cette espèce au Fezzan, pourraient indiquer que ce rapace est aussi un visiteur hivernal plus fréquent qu'on ne le pensait jusqu'à présent.

In North Africa, Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* is known to breed in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (race *punicus*: Orta 1994) and as a regular passage migrant or winter visitor (the European nominate race: Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Isenmann *et al.* 2005). According to Bundy (1976), it is only a winter visitor to Libya, where it has been infrequently and irregularly recorded from November to April in Tripolitania, mainly in the coastal region. Other sightings confirm the rarity of the species in this region (Misonne 1973, Brehme *et al.* 2002). The few records from Cyrenaica are from the coast and Jebel Akhdar in November–April. However, the species is also stated to be occasionally 'fairly common' (R. S. M. Green *in* Stanford 1953, 1954, Latham 1973). In the Libyan Desert there have been a few spring observations in March and April (Bundy 1976).

Table 1. Analysis of the material found in the pluckings at Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* nest sites near Cyrene, Libya, in May 2008.

Tableau 1. Analyse du matériel trouvé dans les plumées auprès des nids d'Éperviers d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* près de Cyrene, Libye, in mai 2008.

Location: A = wood near the Muntasah Shahhat hotel complex, B = wood on the northern periphery of the city of Cyrene. *probably part(s) of a plucking.

Location: A = bois près du complexe hôtelier de Muntasah Shahhat, B = bois à la périphérie nord de la ville de Cyrene. *faisant probablement partie d'une plumée.

Species	Number	Location	Remarks
European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*	1	A	Juvenile
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*	1	A	2 undertail-coverts, 1 tertial*
Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*	1	B	Adult, 1 tail feather, 1 secondary*
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*	1	B	2 tail feathers
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*	2	A	
warbler *Phylloscopus* sp.	1	B	1 tail feather*, probably *P. collybita*
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*	1	B	
Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*	1	B	Adult male, 1 primary*
Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*	1	A	
Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*	1	A	
Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* or House Sparrow *P. domesticus*	1	A	
	3	B	1 adult + 2 juveniles
Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*	10	A	9 juveniles + 1 adult
	5	B	4 juveniles + 1 adult
Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*	1	A	Juvenile

Figure 1. The pine plantation near the Muntasah Shahhat hotel complex, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, where the first nest of Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was found, 27 May 2008 (J. Hering)

La plantation de pins près du complexe hôtelier de Muntasah Shahhat, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, où le premier nid d'Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* a été trouvé, 27 mai 2008 (J. Hering)

Figure 2. Female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* near its nest in the pine plantation near the Muntasah Shahhat hotel complex, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libya, 27 May 2008 (J. Hering)

Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* femelle près de son nid dans la plantation de pins près du complexe hôtelier de Muntasah Shahhat, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libye, 27 mai 2008 (J. Hering)

Figure 3. Occupied Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* nest in a pine tree, Muntasah Shahhat hotel complex, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libya, 27 May 2008 (J. Hering)

Nid occupé d'Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* dans un pin, complexe hôtelier de Muntasah Shahhat, Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libya, 27 mai 2008 (J. Hering)

Figure 4. The pine plantation on the northern periphery of the city of Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libya, where the second nest of Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was found, 29 May 2008 (J. Hering)

La plantation de pins à la périphérie nord de la ville de Cyrene, Cyrenaica, Libye, où le second nid d'Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus* a été trouvé, 29 mai 2008 (J. Hering)

In May 2008 we visited Cyrenaica, where we concentrated our observations in the north-west. In a pine plantation of several hectares, at *c.*600 m, near the Muntasah Shahhat hotel complex, Cyrene (32°49'N 21°52'E; Fig. 1), on 27 May, we discovered a Eurasian Sparrowhawk's nest, from which the female flushed, uttering loud alarm calls. The bird was not particularly shy and permitted us to approach to within 20 m (Fig. 2). The nest, which was lined with white down, was in a fork on the trunk *c.*10 m high and *c.*30 m from the forest edge (Fig. 3). We also found another nest, undoubtedly from the previous year, in the centre of the small wood *c.*50 m from the first. Several moulted feathers belonging to the female, including four primaries, two secondaries and a single tail feather, were found on the

forest floor, as well as the remains of 19 birds of six species of passerines, a European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and a Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (Table 1), all of which are known breeding birds or passage migrants in Cyrenaica (e.g. Bundy 1976).

Two days later, we found a second occupied nest, *c.*1.2 km south-west of the first, in an enclosed park-like area on the northern periphery of the city of Cyrene at *c.*615 m (32°49'N 21°52'E; Fig. 4). It was at a height of *c.*15 m, also in a fork on the trunk, within a very sparsely wooded pine plantation of *c.*5 ha. During our presence the male vocalised continuously. We found five primaries and a secondary of the female as well as 12 pluckings of seven locally occurring songbirds (Table 1).

These two occupied nests at the end of May agree temporally with the findings of Isenmann & Moali (2000) and Isenmann *et al.* (2005), who give the breeding season for Eurasian Sparrowhawk in Algeria and Tunisia as mid April to the beginning of June. Based on habitat in the region, and possibly also in other suitable areas of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, we believe that the Eurasian Sparrowhawk breeds here, especially where pine plantations occur.

The present status of this raptor as a rare visitor to Libya also needs to be questioned. During an 11-day visit to Fezzan in March 2009, we saw Eurasian Sparrowhawks twice: on 28th an individual, probably an adult male, flew over the administrative centre and on 30th an immature female flew over a cultivated area of the Al Dabwat Agricultural Production Project radial oasis complex, in Wadi Ash Shati (27°38'N 14°08'E) (Hering *et al.* in prep.). These birds were probably returning from their winter quarters in Niger or Chad, of which little is known at present (*cf.* Brown *et al.* 1982). These are the first records for this part of the country.

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Correction of three historical bird records from Libya

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Correction de trois mentions historiques d'oiseaux en Libye. Trois spécimens collectés par Toschi en Libye en 1939, s'avèrent avoir été mal identifiés : deux Pouillots fitis *Phylloscopus trochilus* sont en fait des Pouillots véloces *P. collybita* et un traquet libellé comme Traquet motteux *Oenanthe oenanthe* est un Traquet du désert *O. deserti*. Ces mentions constituaient les seuls données hivernales pour les espèces en question, à part quelques mentions plus anciennes du Pouillots fitis qui sont probablement également erronées. Il y a toutefois des observations hivernales récentes du Pouillot fitis et du Traquet motteux dans le pays.

Three major reviews of Libyan birds have been published: Zavattari (1934), Toschi (1969) and Bundy (1976). They contain most details of the original literature sources and historical skin collections. Inevitably, they also contain a few errors and inaccuracies. We found evidence of three such cases while cataloguing the bird collection at the Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA; formerly the Istituto Nazionale Fauna Selvatica) in Ozzano Emilia, Italy. Here we came across Augusto Toschi's series of Libyan skins, originally published by Toschi (1947). Three specimens proved to have been misidentified by the collector, namely:

- Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* no. 10150, shot February 1939 in the Fezzan. Correct species: Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*.
- Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* no. 10151, shot 5 February 1939 at Brak, Fezzan. Correct species: Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*.
- Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* no. 9996, shot 31 January 1939 at Mizdah, western Libya. Correct species: Desert Wheatear *O. deserti*, female.

Only the latter two specimens were mentioned by Toschi (1969) and none were included in Bundy (1976). According to these authorities, there are no other winter records of either species in Libya, apart from a few of Willow Warbler from December–January taken by previous collectors, and retained without examination by Toschi (1969), but these are probably erroneous too (see, however, Brehme *et al.* 2002–06 for recent winter observations of both species). The correct species are considered to be regular winter visitors, and are common at this season. The identity of the remaining 151 preserved specimens (of the original 154: Toschi 1947) appeared correct, at least at the species level.

Acknowledgements

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Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* and its brood parasite, Jos Plateau Indigobird *Vidua maryae*, in northern Cameroon

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L'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* et son parasite, le Combassou de Jos *Vidua maryae*, au nord du Cameroun. L'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* est une espèce extrêmement locale seulement connue avec certitude, avant 2005, des flancs de collines rocheuses et herbeuses au nord du Nigeria. Récemment, plusieurs observations au nord du Cameroun indiquent que sa répartition est plus étendue ; ces observations sont récapitulées ici. Le Combassou de Jos *Vidua maryae* est un parasite de l'Amarante de roche et était supposé être endémique au Plateau de Jos du Nigeria. L'auteur rapporte une observation de mars 2009 dans le nord du Cameroun de combassous en plumage internuptial, qui imitaient les émissions vocales de l'Amarante de roche. Des sonogrammes de leurs imitations du hôte sont présentés, ainsi que des sonogrammes de cris de l'Amarante de roche. Comme il est peu probable qu'une autre espèce de combassou parasiterait un amarante aussi local, il est supposé que ces oiseaux représentent une population auparavant inconnue du Combassou de Jos dans le nord du Cameroun.

Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* was described only 12 years ago, from the Jos Plateau in northern Nigeria (Payne 1998). It belongs to the African/Jameson's Firefinch *L. rubricata / rhodopareia* clade of firefinches (Payne 2004), and is similar to African Firefinch, Mali Firefinch *L. virata* and Chad Firefinch *L. umbrinodorsalis*, but differs from these species in having a reddish back in the male. The combination of a blue-grey bill, reddish back and grey crown in the male is diagnostic. Uniquely, Rock Firefinch was discovered by song mimicry of its brood parasite, Jos Plateau Indigobird *Vidua maryae*. Jos Plateau Indigobird was first found

Figure 1. Male Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* near Mora, northern Cameroon, on 12 March 2009. Birds from northern Cameroon may have less extensive grey on the head than birds from the Jos Plateau (Simon Colenutt)

Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* mâle près de Mora, Cameroun du nord,12 mars 2009. Les oiseaux du nord du Cameroun ont peut-être moins de gris sur la tête que ceux du Plateau de Jos (Simon Colenutt)

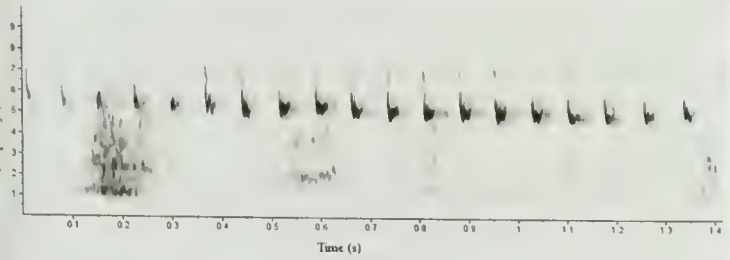

Figure 2. Sonogram of mimicry by Jos Plateau Indigobird *Vidua maryae* of the most common vocalisation of Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis*, a rapid descending trill of 12–13 notes per second, recorded near Mora, northern Cameroon, 13 March 2009.

Sonogramme de l'imitation du Combassou de Jos *Vidua maryae* de l'émission vocale la plus commune de l'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis*, un trille descendant rapide de 12–13 notes par seconde, enregistrée près de Mora, Cameroun du nord, 13 mars 2009.

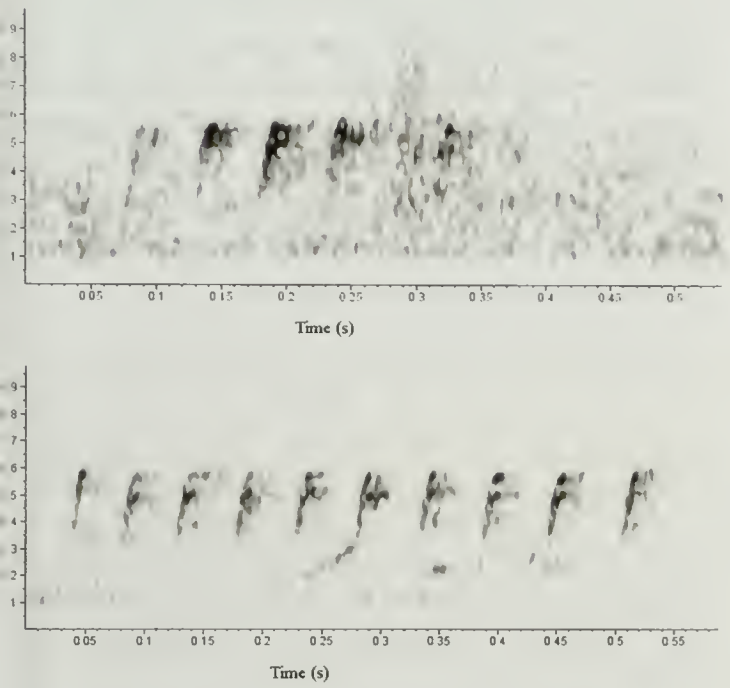

Figure 3a. Sonogram of mimicry by Jos Plateau Indigobird *Vidua maryae* of Rock Firefinch's *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* contact trill, recorded on 12 March 2009, near Mora, northern Cameroon.

Sonogramme de l'imitation du Combassou de Jos *Vidua maryae* du trille de contact de l'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis*, enregistrée près de Mora, Cameroun du nord, 12 mars 2009.

Figure 3b. Sonogram of the contact trill of Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis*, recorded near Mora, northern Cameroon, 12 March 2009.

Sonogramme du trille de contact de l'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis*, enregistré près de Mora, Cameroun du nord, 12 mars 2009.

Figure 4. The non-breeding (presumed) male Jos Plateau Indigobird *Vidua maryae* whose mimicry of Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* vocalisations are visualised in Figs. 2 and 3a. The whitish bill and purplish-grey legs are consistent with those of Jos Plateau Indigobird (Simon Colenutt)

Le Combassou de Jos *Vidua maryae* présumé mâle en plumage internuptial dont les imitations des émissions vocales de l'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* sont représentées par les Figs. 2 et 3a. Le bec blanchâtre et les pattes gris pourpré sont caractéristiques du Combassou de Jos (Simon Colenutt)

in 1968, and initially described as a subspecies of Dusky Indigobird *V. funerea* because it was thought to mimic African Firefinch calls (Payne 1982). Subsequent investigation revealed that it mimics unique calls and differs in morphology, although it differs only in size from Jambandu Indigobird *V. raricola*, from Barka Indigobird *V. larvaticola* by having a slightly darker wing, and from Quailfinch Indigobird *V. nigeriae* by its slightly brighter gloss and larger size (Payne 1996).

At the time of its description, Rock Firefinch was known mainly from the Jos Plateau in Nigeria (09°56'N 08°53'E), but also tentatively from the Mandara Mountains on the border with Cameroon (11°04'N 13°45'E) and from near Rano, in Kano State, Nigeria (11°33'N 08°34'E). Other records of 'African Firefinch' from northern Nigeria were also suspected to belong to the newly described species, as were records from northern Benin and Burkina Faso (Payne 2004). The distribution of Jos Plateau Indigobird was confined to the Jos Plateau.

Recently, several reports of Rock Firefinch have come from northern Cameroon, in similar habitat—bushy and grassy rocky outcrops (Brandt

Table 1. Records of Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* from northern Cameroon

Tableau 1. Mentions de l'Amarante de roche *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* du Cameroun du nord

Date	Observer	Details	Locality
Mar 2004	C. Cohen (pers. comm.)	2 probable	20 km north of Maroua
Feb 2005	N. Borrow (*in Bull. ABC* 12: 179)	1 female	5 km north of Maroua
Mar 2005	A. Riley & R. White (*in litt.* 2005)	2 birds	north of Maroua
Mar 2005	A. Riley & R. White (*in litt.* 2005)	12 birds	Lagdo Lake, *c.*40 km south-east of Garoua
Apr 2006	D. Hoddinott (*in litt.* 2006)	12 birds	north of Maroua
Mar 2007	M. S. L. Mills (pers. obs.)	*c.*10 birds	10 km south-west of Mora
Apr 2007	K. Valentine (*in litt.* 2007)	2 birds	north of Maroua
Oct 2007	C. Artuso (*in litt.* 2007)	6 birds	north of Mora
Mar 2008	N. Borrow (pers. comm.)	several	5 km north of Maroua
Mar 2008	M. S. L. Mills (pers. obs.)	1 pair	110 south-south-west of Maroua
Mar 2009	M. S. L. Mills (pers. obs.)	20–30 birds	10 km south-west of Mora

& Cresswell 2008)—in the vicinity of Maroua (10°36'N 14°20'E) and Mora (10°58'N 14°12'E). The first potential record was by C. Cohen in March 2004 (pers. comm.), although the first published record (in *Bull. ABC* 12: 179) was from 2005, a sighting by N. Borrow, who found a single female on a rocky outcrop *c.*5 km north of Maroua. Since then, repeated sightings in the Mora–Maroua area (Table 1) indicate that this species is at least fairly common here during the dry season, and almost certainly a resident breeder. I have also once recorded birds further south, nearer Garoua (09°44'N 13°50'E; 110 km south-southwest of Maroua), also at a rocky outcrop, although these birds were only seen briefly. A better sighting would have been preferable to be certain of their identity, although the only other possible candidate is Chad Firefinch, which was recently rediscovered in Cameroon (Voaden 2008). There are also unpublished records of Rock Firefinch from Lake Lagdo (09°03'N 13°41'E), south of Garoua, <90 km from where Chad Firefinch was found (see Table 1). These should be treated as unconfirmed until further data become available. Rock Firefinches from Cameroon and the Mandara Mountains appear to differ slightly from those from the Jos Plateau, by having less grey on the crown in the male (see Fig. 1), although the difference is slight and poorly documented, and their calls are reported to be the same (Abakala *et al.* submitted).

Given the relative abundance of Rock Firefinch in northern Cameroon, and because indigobirds often show similar distributions to their hosts, it could be expected that Jos Plateau Indigobird should occur in Cameroon also. However, few ornithologists and birders visit northern Cameroon during or shortly after the rains, when indigobirds are in breeding plumage and on their songposts. Indigobirds rarely sing outside the breeding season and are generally impossible to distinguish in the field in non-breeding plumage.

On 12 March 2009, I was searching for Rock Firefinch and other rocky-country birds with a group of nine other birders, on some rocky hills just south of Mora, where I had seen Rock Firefinch in March 2007. Shortly after sunrise I could hear calls and song of firefinches coming from the base of the hills, and soon we found a loose flock of *c.*20 Rock Firefinches. While observing the firefinches, I made recordings of their contact trills.

After *c.*30 minutes of observations, I heard the distant calls of an indigobird *Vidua* sp. I scanned the tops of trees in the direction of the call, and located a non-breeding bird singing from a *Faidherbia albida* tree at the base of the rocks, in the company of at least two other indigobirds. I quickly moved closer so I could observe their vocalisations and plumage in more detail. I played some generic indigobird calls to try to stimulate singing, and fortunately the birds sang again. Included in the generic ramble of indigobird calls was mimicry of at least two different Rock Firefinch vocalisations, which I recorded using an Edirol R09 recorder with a Sennheiser MKE400

microphone. Recordings were inspected and sonograms produced using Raven Lite software (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2003–08).

The most common and distinctive call of Rock Firefinch is described as a rapid descending trill of 12–13 notes per second (Payne 2004). This call, visualised in a sonogram (Fig. 2), was made by Jos Plateau Indigobird, and delivered at a rate of 13.6 notes per second (n=1). A second call, a short trill, was mimicked by Jos Plateau Indigobird; a sonogram is presented in Fig. 3a. Analogous calls by Rock Firefinch were recorded and are presented as a sonogram in Fig. 3b. Call structure (shape of notes), rate of delivery and frequency are nearly identical, although the firefinch trill consisted of more notes. Male breeding plumage gloss colour and intensity were not observed, although bill (whitish) and leg colour (purplish-grey; Fig. 4) are consistent with Jos Plateau Indigobird. Given the small range of Rock Firefinch, it is highly unlikely that another indigobird species parasitises the population in northern Cameroon. Hence, it can be safely assumed that these birds represent a previously unknown population of Jos Plateau Indigobird in northern Cameroon. Further investigations during the indigobirds' breeding season should enable a better understanding of the distribution and abundance of Jos Plateau Indigobird in Cameroon.

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I thank Hemme Batjes, Andrew Bunting, Simon Colenutt, Andy Deighton, Martin Kennewell, Ian Merrill, Jonathan Newman, Volkert van der Willigen and Barry Wright, who observed the bird with me, for their patience while I made sound-recordings. Nik Borrow generously shared information on his records, and, with Ulf Ottosson, commented on the manuscript. Bob Payne helped to improve the paper's contents.

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Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* camera-trapped at midday near Tiwai Island, Sierra Leone

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Une Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* photographiée à midi par un piège photographique près de l'île de Tiwai, Sierra Leone. Une Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* a été photographiée à midi par un piège photographique à infrarouges près de l'île de Tiwai, Sierra Leone, le 16 juin 2009. Ceci est apparemment la première fois que cette espèce a été photographiée dans la nature. Curieusement, l'oiseau semblait être actif pendant la journée.

As part of a study on Pygmy Hippopotamus *Choeropsis liberiensis*, near-infrared digital camera-traps were placed on and around Tiwai Island, Sierra Leone (07°33'N 11°19'W), between November 2008 and June 2009. Cameras were set to take a single photograph followed by another automatically after ten seconds; the cameras could then not be triggered for a further 60 seconds. Cameras were moved to different locations after each two-week sampling period. On 7 June, two cameras were placed on Tagati Island, a small island of <1 km^2, west of Tiwai.

On 16 June, four photographs of an owl were taken by a camera facing a seasonal inlet on the west side of Tagati. The first two (one of which is reproduced here: Fig. 1) show the owl on the ground near the inlet, facing away from the camera at 11.53 hrs. In the third photograph the owl is landing on a Raffia Palm *Raphia vinifera* at 12.02 hrs (Fig. 2). In the last picture, the facial disk is partially visible (Fig. 3). Although the owl remained in the field of view of the camera for *c.*10 minutes, it may not have moved enough to trigger the camera until it flew off.

The orange-rufous plumage and the plain upperparts identify it as a Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*; the only confusion species, Pel's Fishing Owl *S. peli*, has barred upperparts (Borrow & Demey 2001). Both species are known to occur at Tiwai Island (R. Demey *in Bull. ABC* 15: 275 and *in litt.* 2009). To our knowledge Rufous Fishing Owl has never before been photographed in the wild. The ecology and biology of this Upper Guinea forest endemic are largely unknown. Although most owl species are nocturnal or crepuscular, some are also diurnal (Marks *et al.* 1999). The three species of African fishing owls *Scotopelia*, however, are all considered to normally hunt at night (König & Weick 2008), although Pel's Fishing Owl is reported to be occasionally active in daylight when stressed by food scarcity due to rivers drying up (Kemp 1988). It is

Figures 1–2. Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* on the ground beside a small inlet (1) and perching on a Raffia Palm *Raphia vinifera* (2), on Tagati Island, Sierra Leone, 16 June 2009 (camera-trap photos)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* par terre à côté d'une petite crique (1) et perchée sur un palmier raffia *Raphia vinifera* (2), île de Tagati, Sierra Leone, 16 juin 2009 (photos prises par un piège photographique à infrarouges)

Figure 3. Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, Tagati Island, Sierra Leone, 16 June 2009; part of the facial disk is visible (camera-trap photo)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri*, île de Tagati, Sierra Leone, 16 juin 2009 ; une partie du disque facial est visible (photo prise par un piège photographique à infrarouges)

therefore noteworthy that the Rufous Fishing Owl was photographed during the day and appeared to be active. Whether this is normal behaviour is unknown.

Rufous Fishing Owl is restricted to the forest zone from Sierra Leone to south-west Ghana and is considered Endangered, with an estimated population of <2,500 individuals (BirdLife International 2009). Tiwai Island, a Wildlife Sanctuary with a research station, might represent a convenient base to study this threatened species' ecology, if it proves to occur there regularly. New data could be used to support sustainable land management and conservation plans for the area.

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Noteworthy bird records from São Tomé and Príncipe

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Observations remarquables d'oiseaux de São Tomé et Príncipe. Des observations remarquables d'une douzaine d'espèces d'oiseaux sont rapportées, faites à l'occasion de visites à São Tomé et Príncipe en juillet–août 2007 et janvier et août 2008.

We report noteworthy bird records made during trips to São Tomé and Príncipe in July–August 2007, and January and August 2008. For coordinates of the localities mentioned see Jones & Tye (2006).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
One near the mouth of the Rio Papagaio, Santo Antonio town, Príncipe, on 7 August 2007 (FO & LT; Fig. 1). It was feeding on the shallow ponds among the sand and mudflats with a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and two dark-morph Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis*. Jones & Tye (2006) mention only one record from Príncipe, also at the mouth of the Rio Papagaio, in January in the mid 1990s.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*
One in a large grassy area around the Voice of America facilities south of São Tomé town, with several Whimbrels and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, on 18 January 2008 (Fig. 2). This appears to be the first record for São Tomé (Jones & Tye 2006), although the species was previously recorded on Príncipe, on 7 April 2003 (M. Melo *in Bull. ABC* 11: 77).

Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei*
On 23 January 2008 at least three were heard calling at dusk at our camp near Monte Carmo (sometimes known as Ribeira Peixe; 00°09'06"N 06°33'60"E). Next morning seven birds (including three pairs) were found on a forested plateau surrounded by deep valleys covering about 2.0 × 0.5 km. Most ibises were flushed from the ground and perched nearby. A Critically Endangered endemic, the population density at Ribeira Peixe seems fairly high.

African Crake *Crex egregia*
A medium-sized rail with a short bill, dark legs and a dull brown back mottled with black, flushed from the track from Terreiro Velho to the Rio Pipi, Príncipe, just before the start of the Oquê Pipi trail, on 22 January 2008, was identified as an immature African Crake. On São Tomé, FO observed an adult crossing a track between São Vicente and Praia Piscina on 22 August 2008. The species is rarely recorded from São Tomé and Príncipe, where it is perhaps only a straggler (Jones & Tye 2006).

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Two were foraging with a Whimbrel near the mouth of the Rio Papagaio, Príncipe, on 22 January 2008 (Fig. 4). Greenshanks have been recorded on the islands mainly in December–January (Christy & Clarke 1998), with few records from Príncipe (Jones & Tye 2006).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
One on the east shore of Tinhosa Pequena and two groups of four birds each at Tinhosa Grande, near the slope allowing access to the island, on 21 January 2008 (Fig. 5). Considered uncommon on Príncipe, with only one record from the Tinhosas cited by Jones & Tye (2006). On 26 January 2008, one, with two Whimbrels, was photographed by APL at Praia Jalé, on the south-west coast of São Tomé.

Swifts *Apus* spp.
On 15 July 2007, LT and FO observed a pair of all-dark swifts, noticeably smaller than the Little Swifts *Apus affinis* nearby, over the outskirts of São Tomé. On 25 January 2008, SR also observed a small, all-dark swift with a square tail, over the dirt road between São Vicente and Praia Jalé, in south-west São Tomé. Common Swifts *A. apus* have been reported from São Tomé (Christy & Clarke 1998), but the birds we saw appeared too small and had square tails unlike that species, so their identity is uncertain.


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Also, whilst the race *bannermani* of Little Swift is supposedly endemic to both Sao Tome and Príncipe, the Príncipe birds look noticeably smaller than those on São Tomé when compared to the abundant African Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus parvus*.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica dryas*
One was observed smashing a land snail *Columna columna* against a rock on the trail to Oquê Pipi on 22 January 2008 (Fig. 6). The anvil had the remains of at least 100 *Columna* snails (*C. columna* or the similar *C. leai*). Three more anvils along the trail had mostly *Columna* spp. shells, but one had fragments of a small *Achatina bicarinata* and one crab. Anvils with broken snails found on Príncipe were first attributed to thrushes until it was realised that Príncipe kingfishers show this behaviour (Jones & Tye 2006), which is apparently unknown in mainland forms.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*
Two were perched on the wires of an antenna at Príncipe airport on 23 January 2008. One had the dark mottling on the chest of a first-winter; no details were noted of the second bird, as it flew off immediately. There appears to be only one old previous record, from Baía de Santo Antonio (Jones & Tye 2006).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
On 6 August 2007, during a visit to Praia Seca (01°32'46"N 07°23'56"E), on the south-east coast of Príncipe, FO and LT observed a Yellow Wagtail in non-breeding plumage foraging on the beach near some fishermen huts (Fig. 7). It remained there throughout the afternoon and was still in the same area the following day.

The occurrence of wagtails *Motacilla* spp. in São Tomé and Príncipe has been a minor mystery. They were reported as fairly common in Príncipe during the second half of the 19th century, and it was suggested they were White Wagtails *M. alba*, but there are no specimens (Jones & Tye 2006). This seems to be the first documented record of this species for the country (Jones & Tye 2006).

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*
A group of four pipits seen twice flying over the landing strip of Príncipe airport on 23 January 2008 had unmarked, dark brown upperparts, buffish underparts without obvious spots or stripes, and buff outertail feathers. These features suggest Plain-backed Pipit, a common species in Nigeria with which PH is very familiar. Although in need of proper documentation, this seems to be the first country record for the species (Jones & Tye 2006).

São Tomé Grosbeak *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor*
A pair was feeding on the small green fruit of a *Dicranolepis thomensis* tree (a known food item) at Monte Carmo, at *c.*315 m, on 24 January 2008 (Fig. 8). The birds peeled the husk off and crushed the seed, and were readily attracted by whistles mimicking their single-note contact calls, similar to those of Príncipe Seedeater *Serinus rufobrunneus*, but much stronger, lending support to their suggested close relationship (Melo 2007). The birds approached closely, singing in response to the playback of a song recorded during a previous visit to the area (available at http://xeno-canto.org/africa, XC 18131).

Legend to figures on opposite page

Figure 1. Little Egret / Égrette garzette *Egretta garzetta*, Santo Antonio, Príncipe, 7 August 2007 (F. Olmos)

Figure 2. Intermediate Egret / Égrette intermédiaire *Egretta intermedia*, the Voice of America facilities, São Tomé, 18 January 2008 (F. Olmos)

Figure 3. Dwarf Olive Ibis / Ibis de Bocage *Bostrychia bocagei*, Monte Carmo, São Tomé (A. P. Leventis)

Figure 4. Common Greenshank / Chevalier aboyeur *Tringa nebularia*, Santo Antonio, 22 January 2008 (A. P. Leventis)

Figure 5. Ruddy Turnstones / Tournepierres à collier *Arenaria interpres*, Tinhosa Grande, Príncipe, 21 January 2008 (A. P. Leventis)

Figure 6. Blue-breasted Kingfisher / Martin-chasseur à poitrine bleue *Halcyon malimbica* breaking a *Columna* snail against a rock, Oquê Pipi, Príncipe, 22 January 2008 (A. P. Leventis)

Figure 7. Yellow Wagtail / Bergeronnette printanière *Motacilla flava*, Praia Seca, Príncipe, 6 August 2007 (F. Olmos)

Figure 8. São Tomé Grosbeak / Néospize de São Tomé *Serinus* (*Neospiza*) *concolor*, Monte Carmo, São Tomé, 24 January 2008 (A. P. Leventis)

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Display behaviour of Shelley's Oliveback *Nesocharis shelleyi*

Michael S. L. Mills

Parade du Dos-vert à tête noire *Nesocharis shelleyi*. La parade du Dos-vert à tête noire *Nesocharis shelleyi*, une espèce à répartition restreinte confinée à la Zone d'Endémisme pour les Oiseaux des Montagnes camerounaises, n'a pas encore été documentée. Cette note décrit la parade d'un mâle, observé au Mont Cameroun, et fournit des informations sur son comportement et son chant.

The olivebacks *Nesocharis* are a trio of Central and West African finches (Estrildidae) characterised by their distinctive grey, black and olive plumage (Fry & Keith 2004). Shelley's Oliveback *N. shelleyi* is a range-restricted endemic of the Cameroon Mountains Endemic Bird Area, which straddles Cameroon, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). Little is known concerning its behaviour or breeding (Goodwin 1982, Fry & Keith 2004), and its nuptial displays are undescribed.

On 7 March 2009 I was observing birds on the Race Track above Buea, Mt Cameroon, with a group of nine other birders. At 14.00 hrs, at 1,700 m, I heard high-pitched calls emanating from *c.*4 m above the ground, directly above the trail. The source proved to be a male Shelley's Oliveback, distinguished from the female by its having an olive breast and whitish borders to the sides of the black head (Fig. 2). In its bill it held, by the very tip, an upside-down grass stalk with seeds, *c.*15 cm in length. During *c.*3 minutes of observation it hopped back and forth along a bare branch, singing as it did so. Some of the time its flank feathers were expanded. This is similar to the observed behaviour of a singing male White-collared Oliveback *N. ansorgei*, its sister species, which sang from a branch 10 m above the ground, with its flank feathers expanded and its head and bill raised (Chapin 1959).

Eighty seconds of song were recorded in .wav format (using an Edirol R09 recorder with a Sennheiser MKE400 microphone). Recordings were inspected using Raven Lite software (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2003–08) and a sonogram produced (Fig. 1). The song consisted of a repeated series of 4–8 different, high-pitched, buzzy trills, in the 5–8 kHz range. Within each series, trills differed in duration, pitch and structure, some having an upward or downward inflection, and others being flat. Pitch appeared to undulate between successive notes, and different trills were repeated in a similar sequence, giving the song quite a musical tone. During 80 seconds, the sequence was repeated 14 times, lasting a mean 5.7 seconds.

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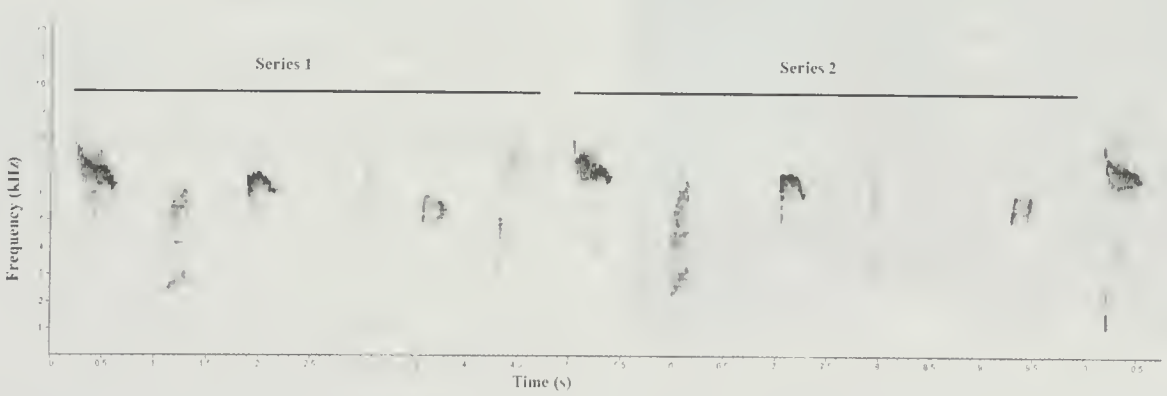

Figure 1. Sonogram of the display song of Shelley's Oliveback *Nesocharis shelleyi*. The song consists of a series of 4–8 buzzy trills in the 5–8 kHz range and lasting 5–6 seconds; here series of five and six notes are shown.

Sonogramme du chant de parade du Dos-vert à tête noire *Nesocharis shelleyi*. Le chant consiste de séries de 4–8 trilles de 5–6 secondes dans la bande de 5–8 kHz ; ici des séries de cinq et six notes sont montrées.

Figure 2. Displaying male Shelley's Oliveback *Nesocharis shelleyi*, holding a *c.*15 cm grass stalk in its bill, Mt Cameroon, Cameroon, March 2009 (Ian Merrill)

Dos-vert à tête noire *Nesocharis shelleyi* mâle en parade, tenant une tige d'environ 15 cm dans son bec, Mont Cameroun, Cameroun, mars 2009 (Ian Merrill)

and Ian Merrill took some excellent photographs. Hilary Fry, Guy Kirwan and Ron Demey helped to improve the contents of this manuscript.

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Little-known African bird:
Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*

Jonathan C. Eames

Un oiseau africain peu connu : le Serpentaire de Madagascar *Eutriorchis astur*. Malgré le fait que nos connaissances concernant le Serpentaire de Madagascar *Eutriorchis astur* ont avancé de façon significative ces dernières 15 années, ce rapace globalement menacé, qui est confiné au nord-est de Madagascar, est rarement observé et encore plus rarement photographié. Superficiellement, il ressemble à un *Accipiter* : il a des ailes relativement courtes et une longue queue barrée, ainsi que des parties supérieures brunes et des parties inférieures marquées de larges barres. La littérature mentionne qu'il pourrait être confondu avec l'Autour de Henst *Accipiter henstii*, dont la femelle a une taille similaire, mais le serpentaire est barré de sombre dessus et a la queue plus arrondie, les barres sur la poitrine plus larges et une crête courte mais bien visible. Contrairement à ce que son nom suggère, il ne prend que rarement des serpents, se nourrissant principalement de caméléons *Furcifer* et *Calumma* spp. et de geckos *Uroplatus* spp.

Figures 1–2. Adult Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*, Masoala National Park, Madagascar, 24 November 2008 (J. C. Eames)

Serpentaire de Madagascar *Eutriorchis astur* adulte, Parc National de Masoala, Madagascar, 24 novembre 2008 (J. C. Eames)

Above all other poorly known or seldom seen bird species of Madagascar, pride of place surely belongs to Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*. This globally Endangered Malagasy endemic has recently been recorded only in the north-east where it occurs mainly in primary forest (Thorstrom & Rene de Roland 2003, BirdLife International 2009). It has been described as elusive and secretive, and is one of the rarest birds of prey in the world (Thorstrom & Rene de Roland 2000, 2003, Thorstrom *et al.* 2003). Although it is not the rarest of Malagasy endemics, Madagascar Serpent Eagle is amongst the hardest to see, even at the handful of sites from which it is known.

Our knowledge of the species has advanced significantly in the last 15 years and clarification of its territorial call has lead to the eagle's discovery

Figure 3. Adult Henst's Goshawk *Accipiter henstii*, Ranamofana National Park, Madagascar, 2 December 2005 (J. C. Eames)

Autour de Henst *Accipiter henstii* adulte, Parc National de Ranamofana, Madagascar, 2 décembre 2005 (J. C. Eames)

at several new sites (BirdLife International 2009). However, there are few published images of the species, helping to perpetuate the near-mythical aura that surrounds this eagle. I have been able to trace only five photographs, all by staff of The Peregrine Fund, who have conducted most of the research to date on this species. Probably the two best known are those of an adult in the hand and an adult perched in the forest subcanopy, published in Morris & Hawkins (1998), whilst two others, of an adult and fledgling at the nest, and of a young bird in the canopy, were published in Thorstrom & Rene de Roland (2003). A photograph of an adult and pullus at the nest can be viewed at http://www.peregrinefund.org/press.

Having not previously encountered the species, I resolved to see and photograph it on a return visit to Masoala National Park in November 2008. Based at Masoala Forest Lodge, I made early-morning forays into the forest with Andrianoelina Fitia Lofontsiriniaina and guide Marco, in the hope of hearing birds calling as they left their nocturnal roost. From 19 to 24 November, we searched daily along trails from 04.00 hrs. We concentrated our efforts on a relatively small area of primary littoral forest (according to Marco the species never ventures into the hills at Masoala) and visited two old nests. Although we never heard the species calling and despite frequent heavy rain, persistence finally paid off. In the early afternoon of 24 November, *c.*500 m from Marco's village of Ambodifonaha and close to a pit-sawing site, we disturbed a large raptor suspended upside-down from an epiphytic fern (possibly an *Asplenium* sp.) *c.*10 m from the trail in logged primary forest. It hung, flapping, preoccupied with trying to take a prey item, possibly a gecko or frog, from within the fern. Upon our approach it dropped whatever it had caught and flew to an exposed perch above the trail, where it was dive-bombed by a Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus*. I was able to take three photographs, of which two are published here (Figs. 1–2). It then flew off through the forest and despite a mad dash over several hundred metres we were unable to relocate it.

Madagascar Serpent Eagle has been described as a rather small and atypical snake eagle, having the shape and general brown and barred appearance of a large *Accipiter* (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). Superficially Madagascar Serpent Eagle does indeed appear *Accipiter*-like: it has relatively short wings and a long barred tail, as well as brown upperparts and broadly barred underparts. The similarity is such that three specimens in collections were originally misidentified as Henst's Goshawk *Accipiter henstii* (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). The two species are reportedly difficult to separate (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Thorstrom & Rene de Roland 2000). Indeed, female Henst's Goshawk is closely similar in size and plumage (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). However, the serpent eagle averages larger (although some measurements overlap) and has dark-barred upperparts, a fuller, more rounded tail, broader breast barring and a short but obvious crest. It also has conspicuous and abundant rictal bristles and a slight ruff on the nape, which has pale tips and dark subterminal bars to each feather. Henst's Goshawk lacks the pale scaling on the nape and has plain, darker brown upperparts and finer barred underparts. In addition, the serpent eagle possesses 6–7 even-width dark tail bars, which are narrower than the brown gaps between them (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Sinclair & Langrand 2003). The bulging head shape is also sometimes referred to (BirdLife International 2009). In life, at close range, the likeness to an *Accipter* is superficial because of the odd bill, teddy-bear like eye and facial shape and feathering. A closely observed serpent eagle is instantly and easily identified as such.

In Figs. 1–2 most of the diagnostic features mentioned above can be seen; for comparison with Henst's Goshawk see Fig. 3. The short crest is flattened and invisible. Although it has been stated that the serpent eagle has short tarsi (Sinclair & Langrand 2003), they appear proportionately long to me. Tarsus length is given as 80–92 mm for Madagascar Serpent Eagle and 81–100 mm for Henst's Goshawk (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001), the latter a bird one would not describe as having short tarsi. Other structural points to note (mentioned by Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001) are the apparently relatively short toes and nails, although these are not easy to see. Also noteworthy is the large yellow eye, an adaptation perhaps to taking *Uroplatus* geckos, which are nocturnal. Furthermore, note the swollen, bulbous appearance of the bill, which lacks the tooth-notched upper mandible of Henst's Goshawk, and the grey cere, which is largely hidden by the rictal

bristles. In the photographs at full resolution one can see the scutellated tarsi, described elsewhere as heavily scaled and knobbly looking (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

Madagascar Serpent Eagle is traditionally placed alongside Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (Kemp 1994, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001) and it had even been suggested that this genus and the monotypic *Eutriorchis* should be united (Brown & Amadon 1968). However, recent research has revealed that *Eutriorchis astur* is not related to the serpent eagles *Spiliornis* of Asia or to *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*—which have now been placed together in the Circaetinae—but nestles within one of two Old World vulture clades, the Gypaetinae, alongside Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* and Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* (Lerner & Mindell 2005). Its English name also does not accurately reflect its dietary preferences as it rarely eats snakes. In a recent study, snakes comprised just 1.5% of prey items brought to a nest, whereas chameleons *Furcifer* and *Calumma* spp. and leaf-tailed geckos *Uroplatus* spp. comprised over 80% (Thorstrom & Rene de Roland 2003). On this trip to Masoala, and despite considerable effort, I failed to locate any *Uroplatus* geckos, which I had easily found after dark on an earlier visit. These geckos are popular in the exotic-pet trade and in some areas there is concern that collectors are reducing the populations (http://www.wildmadagascar.org/wildlife/uroplatus.html). I have no evidence of *Uroplatus* collecting in Masoala National Park, but perhaps the issue is worthy of further investigation?

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Photospot:
Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*

Nik Borrow

L'Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*. Bien que l'Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa* ait été décrite en 1930 — par l'ornithologue américain Herbert Friedmann sur la base d'un spécimen collecté en 1912 au sud de l'Éthiopie — ce n'est que pendant les années 1970 que nos connaissances de l'espèce ont augmentées substantiellement. Elle demeure toutefois classée comme «Insuffisamment documentée». L'oiseau est d'apparence quelque peu erratique et n'est pratiquement jamais observé en dehors de la période de reproduction, en saison des pluies. Son aire de répartition s'étend de la localité type en Éthiopie du sud jusqu'à la Réserve de Mkomazi au nord de la Tanzanie, en passant par les Réserves de Samburu/Shaba et du Parc National de Tsavo au Kenya. Les critères d'identification sont présentés et illustrés par des photos, et comparés avec celles d'autres espèces d'alouettes.

Figure 1. Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*, Shaba National Reserve, Kenya, 3 November 2008 (Nik Borrow). The drawn-out and far-carrying *hoo-ee-oo* song is usually given during song-flight or from the topmost branches of a prominent bush. Whilst singing the bright white throat is forced outwards forming a distinctive 'beard'.

Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*, Réserve Nationale de Shaba, Kenya, 3 novembre 2008 (Nik Borrow). Le chant étiré et portant loin *hoo-ee-oo* est d'habitude émis en vol ou à partir du sommet d'un buisson proéminent. La gorge blanche est gonflée en chantant, formant ainsi une 'barbe'.

Figure 2. Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*, Shaba National Reserve, Kenya, 3 November 2008 (Nik Borrow). Features to look for on a silent bird include the brown centres to the median and greater coverts that are bordered by a darker submarginal line. Also, the streaks on the breast-sides tend to coalesce, giving the illusion of a dark patch.

Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*, Réserve Nationale de Shaba, Kenya, 3 novembre 2008 (Nik Borrow). Les caractéristiques à noter chez un oiseau silencieux comprennent les centres bruns des moyennes et grandes couvertures bordés d'une ligne sombre sub-marginale. Les stries sur les côtés de la poitrine ont aussi tendance à s'unir, donnant l'impression d'une tache sombre.

Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa* is probably one of those few birds that really deserve the often-misused adjective 'enigmatic'. The species was described in 1930 by the American ornithologist Herbert Friedmann from a specimen collected in southern Shoa Province, Ethiopia, by E. A. Mearns in May 1912 (Friedmann

Figure 3. Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*, Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, 28 November 2009 (Axel Smets). In worn plumage the appearance is more uniform but although the pale edges have abraded to quite an extent, the brown-centred coverts with darker vane and submarginal areas can still be seen. Even when not singing this individual shows the distinctive white throat.

Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*, Parc National de Tsavo Est, Kenya, 28 novembre 2009 (Axel Smets). En plumage usé l'apparance est plus uniforme, mais bien que les liserés pâles soient déjà bien abrasés, les couvertures aux centres bruns et les parties plus sombres des plumes sont toujours visibles. La gorge blanche caractéristique est bien apparente, même chez cet individu silencieux.

Figure 4. Foxy Lark *Mirafra alopex*, Shaba National Reserve, Kenya, 17 May 2009 (Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours). The form that overlaps with Friedmann's Lark shows greater contrast and a much warmer tone to the plumage than the latter. Note also that in Foxy Lark the pale-fringed greater and median coverts are dark-centred and the supercilium and semicircular mark below the eye are whiter and more prominent; this effect is further heightened by the blackish lores.

Alouette abyssinienne *Mirafra alopex*, Réserve Nationale de Shaba, Kenya, 17 mai 2009 (Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours). La forme qui chevauche avec l'Alouette de Friedmann a un plumage plus contrasté, au teint beaucoup plus chaud, que l'Alouette de Friedmann. Noter également que chez l'Alouette abyssinienne les grandes et moyennes couvertures ont un centre sombre et des liserés pâles, et que le sourcil et la marque semi-circulaire en dessous de l'œil sont plus blancs et plus prononcés ; cet effet est augmenté par les lores noirâtres.

Figure 5. Williams's Lark *Mirafra williamsi,* Shaba National Reserve, Kenya, 3 November 2008 (Nik Borrow). This lark prefers more open, rocky, lava or sandy plains, is virtually plain-backed and blotched or spotted below and not likely to be confused.

Alouette de Williams *Mirafra williamsi,* Réserve Nationale de Shaba, Kenya, 3 novembre 2008 (Nik Borrow). Cette alouette préfère les plaines plus ouvertes, rocailleuses, de lave ou sablonneuses et est pratiquement unie dessus et tacheté dessous; il est improbable qu'elle soit confondue.

Figure 6. Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica*, Liben Plains, Ethiopia 19 October 2006 (Nik Borrow). This species has a distinctive facial pattern with obvious pale semicircular areas around the eye and a browner plumage with dark centred median and greater coverts.

Alouette roussâtre *Calandrella somalica*, Plaines de Liben, Ethiopie, 19 octobre 2006 (Nik Borrow). Cette espèce a un pattern facial distinct avec des zones pâles semi-circulaires marquées autour de l'œil et un plumage plus brun avec des grandes et moyennes couvertures aux centres sombres.

1930a). During the same expedition, three more specimens were collected from near Archer's Post in the Samburu area of northern Kenya, but these were originally described as a separate species *M. candida* (Friedmann 1930b). There were subsequently no further records until December 1972 when the ringing team at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West National Park, south-east Kenya, found a corpse there after the bird flew into the walls at night, having presumably been attracted to the bright lights of the lodge (Lack 1977).

During the 1970s our knowledge of the bird was much advanced, in particular by Peter Lack who described its song and field features (Lack 1977). However, the species remains elusive and somewhat erratic in its appearances to this day, and it is almost never seen outside the breeding season (see Lack 1997 for all records prior to 1997). It is still classified as 'Data Deficient' (BirdLife International 2009). In order to stand a good chance of seeing Friedmann's Lark the visiting birder must firstly visit the known range, which stretches from the type locality in southern Ethiopia, through the Samburu/Shaba Game Reserves and Tsavo National Park areas of Kenya into the Mkomazi Game Reserve in northern Tanzania. The species' preferred habitat is rather open grassland with sparse to dense bush cover. The best time to look is definitely in the rainy season, but as the rains can be erratic in this region, this is not something that can be easily planned several months in advance. However, a visit timed within the months December to January ('short' rains) or possibly April to May ('long' rains) seems to coincide with the optimum times.

Friedmann's Lark usually makes its appearance once the rains start falling but even this doesn't seem to be 100% guaranteed in the same localities every season. Nonetheless, when the species is present it is often reasonably numerous and probably not easy to miss, provided its most distinctive song is known. One should listen out at any time of day (or night) for a single, long drawn-out and far-carrying *boo-ee-oo* with an emphasis on the middle part. This simple phrase is monotonously repeated at intervals of one to two seconds, either from a conspicuous perch or in an undulating but rather lazy song flight that reaches up to a height of *c.*10 m.

No other smaller lark in range sings like this; Singing Bush Lark *M. cantillans*, Williams's Lark *M. williamsi*, Flappet Lark *M. rufocinnamomea*, Foxy Lark *M. alopex* and Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica* all give more complex or variable scratchy, warbling or melodious songs. The distinctive Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* sings a slow, deliberate, but slightly slurred whistle from the ground *seeu seeu . . . seeu seeu seeu . . . seeu seeu TEWleu.* Perhaps the song of Friedmann's Lark might be overlooked as coming from a White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*, although this is rather unlikely.

Having heard the song the bird shouldn't be difficult to locate, as it is by no means a 'skulker' when singing or displaying. Check the tops of the bushes for a typical *Mirafra* lark that will be slightly raising its crown feathers and puffing out its pure white throat with every song phrase. This prominent white throat extends in a half-collar around the neck, immediately giving the bird a most distinctive appearance totally unlike its congeners (Figs. 1–2).

Perhaps the real mystery is to where this species goes when it is not breeding and vocal. There is some evidence to suggest that Friedmann's Lark is a local or intra-African migrant (for example, the appearances at Ngulia Lodge at night), but if this is the case exactly where are the non-breeding areas that it migrates to and from? Perhaps part of the problem lies in identifying the bird using plumage alone and if faced with a silent lark in north-east Africa what features should be looked for?

The larks in the genus *Mirafra* range in size from small to large with short, rounded wings, and variably shaped bills that can be short and conical or long and decurved. Friedmann's Lark is typical of the smaller, shorter billed types. Of the several comparable *Mirafra* larks, White-tailed Lark *M. albicauda* occurs in dense grasslands on black cotton soils, probably a habitat not suited to Friedmann's, and *albicauda* also appears blackish from a distance and so can be immediately rejected as a confusion species. The similar looking Flappet Lark *M. rufocinnamomea*, unlike Friedmann's, lacks any white in the tail, although the buff or rufous outer tail feathers can be confusingly pale in some populations. The localised Williams's Lark *M. williamsi* prefers more open, rocky, lava or sandy plains, is virtually plain-backed and blotched or spotted below, and again unlikely to be confused. The distinctive facial pattern of Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica* with

its obvious pale semicircular areas around the eye and browner flight feathers should also be enough to immediately discount this species.

We are therefore left with two widespread and common species that perhaps offer the greatest challenge to correct identification. A Foxy Lark *M. alopex* was recently misidentified as Friedmann's Lark: see the photograph in *Bull. ABC* 16: 234, reproduced here (Fig. 3). Comparing this bird with Friedmann's Lark, we should note that the general coloration of Foxy Lark shows greater contrast, being generally warmer and much more rufous. This is particularly noticeable on the edges of the primaries, which form an obvious reddish panel on the closed wing. The pale-fringed greater and median coverts of Foxy Lark are dark-centred, whereas in Friedmann's Lark these feathers are brown-centred with a darker submarginal line. The white supercilium and semicircular mark below the eye are whiter and more prominent on Foxy Lark, which effect is heightened by the blackish lores. An encounter with the little-known rufous morph of Friedmann's Lark may be more problematic but this form should show an even more uniform appearance with the white areas washed warm buff.

Singing Bush Lark *M. cantillans* is somewhat more similar in plumage tone to Friedmann's and is perhaps the most likely confusion species. However, it is always a colder, greyer looking bird and completely lacks the rufous fringes to the flight feathers (Lack 1992, Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). The central rectrices of Friedmann's are also reddish-brown as opposed to cold grey or sepia brown in the appropriate race, *marginata*, of Singing Bush Lark. Another feature seemingly unique to Friedmann's is that the streaks on the breast-sides tend to coalesce, giving the illusion of a dark patch somewhat akin to that often seen on short-toed larks *Calandrella* spp.

With increased understanding of the field features, perhaps it will not be too long before the final mysteries of this little-known bird are finally unravelled.

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Finding southern Ethiopia's endemic birds

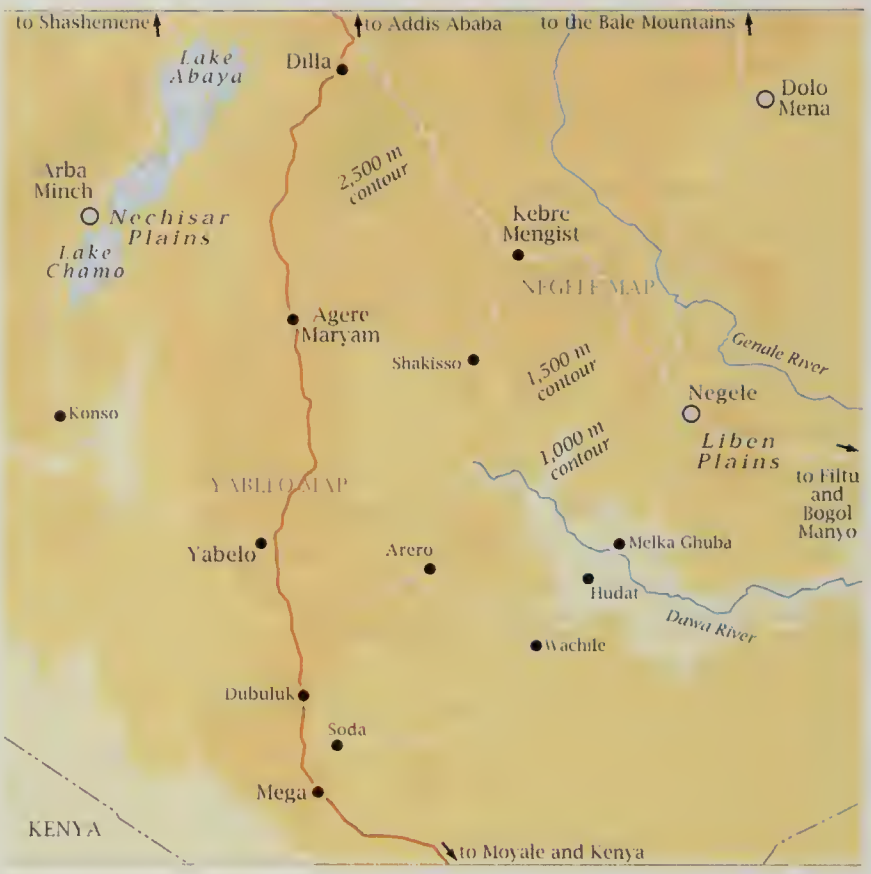
Claire N. Spottiswoode

Trouver les oiseaux endémiques au sud de l'Éthiopie. Le sud de l'Éthiopie possède un endémisme avien remarquable et est reconnu comme une Zone d'Endémisme pour les Oiseaux. Cet article fournit des informations concernant cinq espèces endémiques et explique comment les trouver sur le terrain. Il s'agit du Touraco de Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii*, de l'Engoulevent de Nechisar *Caprimulgus solala*, de l'Alouette d'Erard *Heteromirafra sidamoensis*, de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* et du Corbin de Stresemann *Zavattariornis stresemanni*. Ces espèces sont menacées par la dégradation ou la destruction de leur habitat par les activités d'une population humaine toujours en augmentation.

Scattered along the southernmost escarpment of Ethiopia's highlands are the tiny distributions of five endemic bird species. This nucleus of remarkable and unexplained endemism in grassland, savanna and juniper forest is recognised as a global Endemic Bird Area (EBA; Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). All five endemics are globally threatened, one critically so, and conservation projects in the region will be beneficiaries of funds raised by the 2010 British Birdwatching Fair. This support is urgently needed to avert at least one imminent extinction: without immediate conservation intervention, southern Ethiopia's Liben Lark (previously known as Sidamo Lark: see Collar 2009) seems destined to become mainland Africa's first recorded bird extinction (Spottiswoode *et al.* 2009).

Endemics aside, birdwatching in this region is tremendously diverse, enjoyable and for the most part straightforward, owing to its open habitats and dry climate. The focus of this article is, however, the endemic species, briefly sketching their ecology and how and where each can most reliably be seen during a short birding trip. Much of the information is adapted from a forthcoming bird-finding guide to Ethiopia (Spottiswoode *et al.* in press), which also describes in detail other sites along the journey 'linking' the endemic species, from Negele to Yabelo via the village of Arero.

Until recently, the pantheon of southern Ethiopia's endemics would also have included the far-flung Degodi Lark *Mirafra degodiensis*, but Collar *et al.* (2008) have shown this species to be poorly defined with respect to morphology, voice and genetics, and best regarded as a subspecies of Gillett's Lark *Mirafra gilletti*, itself a relatively localised endemic to the Horn of Africa.



Above: general map of southern Ethiopia showing the main areas discussed herein. All of the maps reproduced here are by Claire Spottiswoode, and taken from *Finding Birds in Ethiopia*, reproduced with permission of the publishers.

Legend to figures on opposite page

Figures 1–2. Liben (formerly Sidamo) Lark / Alouette d'Érard *Heteromirafra sidamoensis*, Liben Plain, Ethiopia, 2 August 2007 (Greg Davies)

Figure 3. Prince Ruspoli's Turaco / Touraco de Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii*, Arero Forest, Ethiopia, 31 August 2005 (Claire Spottiswoode)

1

2

3

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*

When Prince Ruspoli was trampled to death by an elephant in south-west Ethiopia in 1893, his collecting bag—happily intact—contained the type specimen of this turaco. The specimen was presumed to originate from Arero Forest (described below), but it is now clear that the bird occurs patchily over a wider area of southern Ethiopia, and is not confined to forest. Despite its tolerance of tall *Acacia* and secondary growth, it remains heavily threatened by wood extraction and agriculture (Borghesio *et al.* 2004). There is little confidence that its distributional limits have been properly defined, and any records outside its established range (between Arero and the Genale River) are of great interest and should be reported to the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS; BirdLife in Ethiopia). The three sites below represent those where it can most reliably be seen, but keep an eye out for the species in any denser roadside vegetation throughout the wooded highland foothills (particularly from Negele to Kebre Mengist and Shakisso). This species and the more widespread White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis* occur alongside one another at Arero Forest and in the Kebre Mengist region; hybrids are worryingly widespread at the latter (Lernould & Seitre 2002, Borghesio *et al.* 2004).

Finding it. Although habitat degradation in the heavily populated Negele region has already taken a heavy toll on Prince Ruspoli's Turaco (Borghesio *et al.* 2004), one site in this area is perhaps still the simplest place to see it. Halfway between Negele town and the Liben Plain (see Liben Lark below), a drainage line with sparse thicket crosses the road (1 on Negele map; 05°18.44'N 39°38.04'E). Scan for turacos perched in the open on exposed branches in the early morning and evening, often calling hoarsely, or stroll through the habitat to search for them; when flushed they typically fly only a short distance to the next clump of thicket.

Travelling between Negele and the Bale Mountains, many birders have sought this species (with some success) at the point where the road crosses the Genale River. Stop at the sandy drift (2 on Negele map; 05°41.10'N 39°31.85'E) 2.8 km south of the main Genale bridge, and search the many impressive fig trees here, particularly in the dry season. A local turaco guide, Adem Dube, may well appear and help, and guide you up a beautiful wooded valley to the east. Turacos also occur in mixed *Acacia–Terminalia–Combretum* woodland further from the Genale River.

Arero Forest, a mixed juniper and *Podocarpus* evergreen forest west of Negele, is the presumed type locality of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. This area is prone to ethnic disputes so it is worth checking on the security situation before visiting. Entering Arero village, turn left at the large 'roundabout' centred on a big tree, and you will shortly enter juniper forest (1 on Arero map). Turn right 6.2 km from the roundabout (04°47.42'N 38°49.47'E), and keep an eye out from this point for turacos at the roadside, although they are more commonly seen further on. Continue through this forest, beyond a cleared area, until you reach a second, better-developed forest patch. Soon after this point there is an area of exposed rock on the right-hand side of the road (2 on map), which provides a fine place to stand, ideally with a scope, and scan the juniper canopy for turacos. Also walk slowly along the road either side of this site, and keep alert for 'crashing' sounds in the canopy, nasal, squirrel-like trilling or explosive alarm calls, or red wings gliding amongst the junipers. Beware, though, that all of these can also indicate White-cheeked Turaco. The forest beyond the exposed rock, extending along another 2.6 km of road, is also an excellent area for the turaco. Arero Forest itself can feel rather birdless, but other species include Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichii*, Northern Brownbul *Phyllastrephus strepitans* and White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*.

Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala*

So far as is known the Nechisar Nightjar is endemic to the isolated grasslands of the Nechisar Plain, at the western extremity of this EBA. To date it is known with certainty only from the type specimen, a single and distinctive wing famously rescued from a decomposing roadkill in 1990 (Safford *et al.* 1995), and an excellent guide to its potential field identification has already been published in *Bull. ABC* (Butchart 2007). There has recently (2009) been a tantalising first claim of a live bird (I. Sinclair pers. comm.), although full details remain forthcoming. It is probable that an individual will need to be captured to confirm this species' continued existence.

Finding it. The Nechisar Plains lie within the spectacularly beautiful Nechisar National Park,

near the town of Arba Minch in the Great Rift Valley. At the time of writing the agonisingly poor road from Shashemene to Arba Minch was being remade, which will hopefully simplify future searches. The black cotton soils of the plains are crisscrossed by several tracks, a jolting 30 km (occasionally impassable after rain) beyond the park entrance, and this is also the best place in the world to see the oddly localised White-tailed Lark *Mirafra albicauda*. The area is very good for nightjars in general, with nine species occurring in all, and a night search is likely to turn up one or several of the following: Slender-tailed *C. clarus*, Star-spotted *C. stellata*, Donaldson-Smith's *C. donaldsoni*, Montane *C. poliocephalus* and perhaps even Standard-winged *Macrodipteryx longipennis*.

Liben (formerly **Sidamo**) **Lark** *Heteromirafra sidamoensis*

The Liben Lark is a perilously threatened bird confined to the arid grassland of the Liben Plain near Negele, and recent surveys indicate that fewer—probably far fewer—than 250 individuals survive within its tiny range, which continues to be rapidly squeezed by habitat loss through crop planting, overgrazing and scrub encroachment (Collar *et al.* 2008, Spottiswoode *et al.* 2009). By 2009 it was confined to less than 3,000 ha of heavily degraded habitat (Donald *et al.* in press). It belongs to a uniformly imperilled genus of highland grassland larks that also comprises the Vulnerable Rudd's Lark *H. ruddi* of South Africa and the Critically Endangered Archer's Lark *H. archeri* of Somaliland, which has not been seen with certainty since its discovery in 1922.

Finding it. For a species so close to extinction, the Liben Lark could still, at the time of writing, relatively easily be seen. It remains most numerous at the western end of the Liben Plain (3 on Negele map; around 05°16.37'N 39°41.08'E), just south (1–2 km) of a dilapidated but still active military camp, which it is essential to avoid. The lark is found in relatively short grass with very sparse or absent shrubs. Early mornings are best (especially 06.30–09.30 hrs), seemingly year-round, when males are most likely to be heard giving their short skylark *Alauda*-like aerial song that is audible at several hundred metres. Males hover as they sing only *c.*10 m above the ground, resembling a fly on the horizon before they parachute down after about 20 seconds. At closer range, their incredibly elongated hindclaws can be seen dangling conspicuously. This short and largely stationary song-flight contrasts with the long, high, circular and somewhat chirruping song-flights of Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica*, which is very common here. When flushed, Somali Short-toed Lark is easily distinguished by its rather nasal flight call (if anything, a flushed Liben Lark gives a rather melodious *tseep-eeep-eeep-eeep*, reminiscent of a Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens*), and on the ground by its relatively heavy pinkish bill, conspicuous whitish eye-ring, heavily streaked (rather than scalloped) mantle, and generally pot-bellied and horizontal posture. The alternative (if you are unable to visit in the morning) is to walk until you flush a Liben Lark; they tend not to fly, but run quickly and rodent-like through the grass, occasionally standing upright to scan their surroundings, showing their pale, triangular-looking head, markedly scalloped back and pale central crown-stripe.

Birds are thin on the ground on the Liben Plain, but other interesting species to be seen here are Hartlaub's Bustard *Eupodotis hartlaubi*, remarkably high concentrations of Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*, Somali Courser *Cursor somalensis*, Black-winged Lapwing *Vanellus melanopterus*, White-crowned Starling *Spreo albicapillus*, whilst Prince Ruspoli's Turaco and Salvadori's Seedeater *Serinus xantholaemus* occur nearby. Quail Plover *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* has been seen here, and occasionally small groups of unusually easterly White-tailed Swallows *Hirundo megaensis* (Gabremichael *et al.* 2009).

White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*

The range of this species overlaps almost perfectly with that of the Ethiopian Bush Crow; this coincidence is not at all understood, since the birds have quite different ecologies. White-tailed Swallows have an extremely agile, bat-like flight, and are typically seen speeding gracefully over open savannah and scrubland. They especially favour places with sparser cover, such as open valleys, but sometimes occur over woodland. The species was first collected by Con Benson and his Mozambican collector, Jali Makawa, while they were stationed at Mega during the Second World War and did much pioneering work (Benson 1946). Benson suspected that they bred in hollows in termite mounds, and this has been confirmed

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Legend to figures on opposite page

Figure 4. White-tailed Swallow / Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis*, Liben Plain, Ethiopia, 29 June 2006 (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 5. Ethiopian (Stresemann's) Bush Crow / Corbin de Stresemann *Zavattariornis stresemanni*, between Yabello and Arero, Ethiopia, 29 May 2009 (Paul Donald)

Left: map of the Negele region of southern Ethiopia

Below: map of the Yabelo region of southern Ethiopia, with (inset) details of the Arero Forest.

to occur (M. N. Gabremichael pers. comm.), but circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that they may also nest against the interior beams of Borana houses, as does the sympatric Ethiopian Swallow *H. aethiopica*. Any breeding records are of interest and should be submitted to EWNHS.

Finding it. White-tailed Swallows can be seen anywhere in the Yabelo–Arero–Mega triangle, and are likely simply to be bumped into during a couple of days birding in the area. If time is short and luck is low, though, there are some specific areas that are well worth focusing on. Perhaps best of all is the open, heavily grazed vicinity of the village of Dubuluk (2 on the Yabelo map). Scanning the open country immediately north and south of the village is likely to turn up a swallow. The arid, rocky country along the gravel road from the main Yabelo–Mega road to Soda (turn-off at 04°09.56'N 38°16.83'E; 3 on map) is also good for swallows, as well as species typical of arid stony country such as Somali Courser, Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* and Somali Fiscal *Lanius somalicus*. (Note that a smaller short-cut track—4 on the map—leaving the tar road a little further north,

at 04°12.52'N 38°16.87'E, and rejoining the main Soda dirt road at 04°11.51'N 38°20.59'E is also very good for birding; you might choose to return this way.) A third place to search is the open, largely cultivated area just south of Mega town, on the road to Moyale. Stop along the road 6–14 km south of the town (5 on the map; 04°01.05'N 38°22.02'E) scanning especially in open areas along river valleys. Beware that Ethiopian Swallows also occur in all of these areas, but are readily distinguishable by their dark tails, breast markings, and noticeably less agile flight.

Ethiopian (Stresemann's) Bush Crow
Zavattariornis stresemanni
Ethiopia's star endemic is also an evolutionary and ecological enigma: its closest relatives are the ground-jays *Podoces* of central Asia (Ericson *et al.* 2005), and it is bafflingly confined to a small scrap of arid savannah in the triangle formed by Yabelo, Arero and Moyale in Ethiopia's far south. Happily it is patchily common in this area, and very easily seen. The first sign of its presence is often its nest, a large gourd of spiny sticks with an upward-facing entrance tunnel, sitting on the flat top of an *Acacia*. It is highly social, confiding, wonderfully characterful, and especially common and tame in the vicinity of villages and livestock enclosures, where it turns over pieces of livestock dung in search of grubs, and even perches on cattle. Flocks are noisy and mobile, frequently giving metallic, Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*-like calls, from which comes its Borana name, *kaka*. Although bush crows are still relatively numerous, there is much concern that they are currently declining owing to the whittling away of their habitat of mature *Acacia* savannah by commercial cultivation, charcoal production, and bush encroachment probably caused by overgrazing and fire supression (Borghesio & Giannetti 2005, Gedeon 2006, Mellanby *et al.* 2008).

Finding it. Seeing an Ethiopian Bush Crow is still unlikely to pose any problems. Any area with some tall acacias and ideally a village or animal enclosure nearby is likely to reveal a party of bush crows. If time is very short, an excellent area to focus on is the tall woodland just north of Yabelo, on the main road to Addis Ababa (map) and in the vicinity of a small settlement called Harobake (1 on the Yabelo map; 04°59.56'N 38°12.59'E), where a livestock market is held on Sundays. The combination of tall acacias, little ground cover, and the presence of cattle and camel enclosures is prime habitat for bush crows, but take care when photographing them that no livestock are in the background, as this can offend their owners. Another area with a particularly good concentration of bush crows is the first 10–40 km of the dirt road from Yabelo to Arero, where bush crows are almost invariably present in the vicinity of small Borana settlements.

General birding in the Yabelo–Mega area is tremendously diverse and exciting, long after the first bush crows and swallows have been sighted. Species likely to be seen during a 2–3-day visit include Somali Courser, Vulturine Guineafowl *Acryllium vulturinum*, Short-tailed Lark, Somali Short-toed Lark, Foxy Lark *Mirafra alopex*, Scaly Chatterer *Turdoides aylmeri*, Somali Crombec *Sylvietta isabellina*, Pygmy Batis *Batis perkeo*, Pringle's Puffback *Dryoscopus pringlii*, Somali Fiscal, Red-naped Bushshrike *Laniarius ruficeps*, White-crowned Starling and Northern Grosbeak Canary *Serinus donaldsoni*.

The future

All of southern Ethiopia's endemics are threatened. The turaco faces habitat destruction from wood cutting and agriculture, and the lark, swallow and bush crow from bush enroachment, agricultural expansion and rangeland degradation. There are hints that new species to science might still await discovery in the region, but if so they will doubtless find themselves listed as threatened as soon as they are described. In the face of relentless population pressure and large-scale vegetation shifts hastened by climate change, the long-term challenges to the birds of southern Ethiopia are truly daunting. Yet there is reason for optimism, not least that human and conservation interests often coincide in this region: bush encroachment and rangeland degradation favour neither birds nor pastoralists (Spottiswoode *et al.* 2009, Donald *et al.* in press). The 2010 Birdfair will be the first to focus on the Afrotropics for many years and will bring significant support to the invaluable work of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society. Most urgently of all, their efforts at grassland restoration on the Liben Plain should give the Liben Lark a fighting chance of seeing out the new decade.

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Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2009, with a few from earlier dates**. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R. J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (*in* R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2009 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R. J. Dowsett (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (en R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège : Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Azores

The following records are from May–November 2009. The second **Black-capped Petrel** *Pterodroma hasitata* for the Azores was photographed south of Queimada, Pico, on 22 May (the first was on 26 May 2007), whilst the fifth **Trindade Petrel** *P. arminjoniana* was a dark morph photographed south of Faial on 20 August. The **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, first seen on 9 November 2008, was joined by a first-year on 29 October with both remaining to at least late November; a third was on Flores in October–November. An adult **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* was on the Mosteiros cliffs, São Miguel, in November. **Double-crested Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax auritus* were seen on Flores in October (one) and São Miguel in November (up to two).

On Santa Maria, an **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* was observed on 11 October, and the long-staying **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* at Vila harbour pool through October. Up to two **American Great Egrets** *Egretta alba egretta* were on Corvo in September–November, with a **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* there on 20–23 October (and one on Flores on 30 October). A **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* on Terceira on 30 August was the first for the Azores.

The third **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* for the Azores remained at Vila harbour pool, Santa Maria, until 4 June. A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** *Branta (bernicla) hrota* was on Corvo from 18 October. On Terceira, a flock of up to 19 **Blue-winged Teals** *Anas discors* was seen on 14–22 October, a juvenile **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* from 31 October into November, and a male **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* on 11–13 June. A female-plumaged **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* on Flores on 30 October that appeared at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, next day, is the first for the archipelago. Single **Taiga Merlins** *Falco columbarius columbarius* were reported on Corvo on 5 November and Flores on 21 October and 4 November. If accepted, a first-year **Barbary Falcon** *F. peregrinoides* at Anjos, Santa Maria, on 12 August will be the first for the Azores.

Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* were reported on Terceira, in June–July and October–November, on São Miguel on 17–23 October (up to two), and on Flores on at least 21 October (up to four). A **Kildeer** *C. vociferus* was on Flores on 17–18 October and up to three **Eurasian Dotterels** *C. morinellus* on Corvo from 10 October into November. Records of *Calidris* sandpipers included **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *C. pusilla* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, in early September (three) and on Corvo on 16–23 October (one), a **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from 2 September, **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla* on Corvo, on 14 September and 18–23 October (one), São Miguel on 13 October (one), Terceira on 14–31 October at least (one), and Flores on 14–18 October (one), **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* on Terceira in September (two) and at Caldeirão, Corvo, on 14 September (four), and **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from 2 September

Figure 1. Thick-billed Cuckoo / Coucou d'Audebert *Pachycoccyx audeberti*, Gbadagba Game Ranch, north of Djidja, Zou, Benin, 11 February 2009 (Bruno Portier)
Figure 2. Male Barka Indigobird / Combassou de Barka *Vidua larvaticola*, near Didani, west of Cobly, Benin, 30 August 2009 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

(three). Other waders included a **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocryptes minimus* on São Miguel in October, **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* on São Miguel on 25 October (two shot), on Corvo in October–November, and on Flores from 15 October (one). An **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* was on Flores on 14–18 October and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* flew in off the sea at Anjos on Santa Maria on 12 October. On Terceira, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* and a **Willet** *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* were found in September.

Gull records on Terceira include a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* on 22 October and 3 November (with another on Flores on 30 October) and a first-year **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* on 31 October and an adult on 19 November. Two **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were still at Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, during June, but they failed to hatch young. On Pico, possibly the same **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* first reported this year on 24 April was still present at Manhenha in June. On Terceira, a first-year **American Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger surinamensis* stayed at Cabrito reservoir from 11 September and a **White-winged Tern** *C. leucopterus* was observed on 11–18 October.

Yellow-billed Cuckoos *Coccyzus americanus* were recorded on Corvo on 15–30 October (at least two) and São Jorge on 16 October (one). A **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* was on Corvo on 9 October, and single **Chimney Swifts** *Chaetura pelagica* on Corvo on 23–27 October and Terceira on 31 October.

Four firsts for the Azores include a **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on São Jorge on 17 October, a possible **Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* on Santa Maria on 28 May, a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on Corvo on 14 September, and a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*, also on Corvo, on 1–15 November. Up to two **Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus rubescens* were on Corvo from 17 October to 15 November. A **'black-eared wheatear'** *Oenanthe hispanica / melanoleuca* on Santa Maria on 9 September was the second for the archipelago.

As in previous years, an impressive number of New World passerines was reported in September–November, including four firsts for the Azores: on Corvo, a **Canada Warbler** *Wilsonia canadensis* on 12 October and a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Dendroica pensylvanica* on 13 October; and on Flores, a **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* on 5 November and two **Dickcissels** *Spiza americana* on 6 November. Other species seen, mainly in October, on Corvo, include a **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus*, a **Yellow-throated Vireo** *V. flavifrons*, at least one **Philadelphia Vireo** *V. philadelphicus*, at least two **Red-eyed Vireos** *V. olivaceus*, **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*, a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana*, an **American Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia*, up to two **Black-throated Green Warblers** *D. virens*, a **Myrtle Warbler** *D. coronata*, an **American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*, up to two **Ovenbirds** *Seiurus aurocapilla*, up to three **Common Yellowthroats** *Geothlypis trichas*, a **Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis*, a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*, **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* and **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula*. Flores held a female **Magnolia Warbler** *Dendroica magnolia*, a female **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea*, a **Savannah Sparrow**, a **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophyrs*, a **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus*, a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, an **Indigo Bunting** and a **Baltimore Oriole** (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 252–257, 311–322, 383–389).

Benin

Records from 2009 include the following. Two **Streaky-breasted Flufftails** *Sarothrura boehmi* were heard and a female flushed in rice fields east of Cobly, Atacora department, on 5 September; the

next day a female and two juveniles were seen at close range. These are apparently the first records for Benin (*JM & SM*). The following species were found outside the range indicated in Borrow & Demey (2004. *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*). A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was observed at Gbadagba Game Ranch, north of Djidja, Zou, on 11 February and 30 April (Fig. 1; *BP*). **Zitting Cisticolas** *Cisticola juncidis* were observed at several localities in the communes of Cobly, Tanguiéta and Boukoumbé, Atakora, in the north-west, and also at Cotonou, in June–September. Two **Whistling Cisticolas** *Cisticola lateralis* were photographed and their song tape-recorded 8 km east of Tchaourou, Borgou, on 22 August. Two male indigobirds with a greenish gloss and uttering a call similar to that of Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata* near Didani, west of Cobly, on 30 August, were thought to be **Barka Indigobirds** *Vidua larvaticola* (Fig. 2; *JM & SM*).

Botswana

The following records are from May 2009–early January 2010. Single **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were observed at Lobatse sewage ponds on 26 July (*ST*), in the Nata River close to Nata Delta on 7 September (*PN*) and on a small pan near Ghanzi on 26 November (*KG*). Some 56 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, including brown immatures, were counted along the Boteti River between Makalamabedi and Samedupi in late July (*ST*); *c.*42 were at Shashe Dam on 26 July, with 55 there on 23 January (*PD'A*, *NBo et al.*), and 43 at Nata Delta on 10 August (*CB*). A single **Pink-backed Pelican** *P. rufescens* was seen along the Okavango River between Mohembo and Shakawe on 18 July (*PH et al.*); 45 were noted along the Savuti Channel between Mantswe Pan and Zibadianja on 17 July (*GH*, *BG*), one at Bokaa Dam on 10 January (*CB*), and 13 at Shashe Dam on 23 January (*PD'A*, *NBo*).

An **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* at a pan in the extreme south-west in November, was well out of range (*ME*); there was a large influx of this species in South Africa at the same time. Another was at Thagale Dam, north of Mochudi in the south-east on 23 January; this is only the third record for this region of Botswana (*CB*). Two **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were seen at the Crocodile Pools in Mokolodi Nature Reserve on 6 December (*DMc*, *MG*, *CV et al.*). Large flocks of *c.*300 **Woolly-necked Storks** *C. episcopus* were noted in Moremi Game Reserve in early January (*MM*, *AF*). A single **White Stork** *C. ciconia*, probably from the South African breeding population, spent the winter at Malema Pan in Khama Rhino Sanctuary (*IW*); two were at Mokubilo Pan on 30 July (*ST*) and one was at Lake Ngami on 17 August (*CB*). Unusual in south-east Botswana, a **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was at Mokolodi Nature Reserve, near Gaborone, in late October–early November (*GB, SB*). Few **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus* (*ruber*) *roseus* were seen in July, other than four at Phakalane sewage ponds, near Gaborone, on 5th (*JD*), three at Ramotswa sewage ponds and one at Thagale Dam on 12th, and 52 at Bokaa Dam on 26th (*CB*), a single at Rysana Pan on 31st (*ST*), with 300 at Nata Delta on 10 August; on 18 October there were 80 at Bokaa Dam (*CB*). In mid December *c.*100,000 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoenicoenias minor* were in the country, including *c.*60,000 along the edge of Sua Pan and 10,000 at Nata Sanctuary (*CB*).

Two **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* were at Phakalane sewage ponds on 5 July (*JD*), one at Bokaa Dam on 18 October, and eight at Thagale Dam on 23 January (*CB*). **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* were seen at Mogobane Dam on 22 July (one: *CB*), at Lake Ngami on 29 July (174: *RR*, *PH*) and at Mokolodi Crocodile Pools on 6 December (two: *DMc*, *MG et al.*). At Thagale Dam, 260 **Southern Pochards** *Netta erythrophthalma* (with 670 at nearby Bokaa Dam) on 23 January represents a good count (*CB*). July counts of **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* included two at Phakalane sewage ponds on 5th (*JD*), five at Jwaneng sewage ponds and 77 at Moshupa Dam on 20th (*MG*, *DG*, *HH*) and three at Lobatse sewage ponds on 26th (*ST*); one was at Mokolodi Crocodile Pools on 6 December (*MG et al.*) and 32 were at Sekagwana Dam, near Modipe Hill, in late December–early January (*IW*).

An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was at Lake Ngami in late December (*CB*). Three **Hooded Vultures** *Necrosyrtes monachus* were at a Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* carcass and four at a pan in Moremi game reserve on 9 August (*ST*), with six between Xakanaxa and Paradise pools on 15 September (*PN*). **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* records include three south of Ghanzi on 28 May (*DB*, *BB*), a pair nesting in the Central Kakahari Game Reserve in May (*GH*), one near Gaborone on 12 July (*CB*), one with White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* near Mopipi and two near Rakops on 31 July, one near Samedupi on 1 August (*ST*), two in Khutse Game Reserve in September and one at Nxai pan on 9 September (*PN*). Single **White-headed Vultures** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* were seen at the Khwai River on 9 August (*ST*) and in Khutse Game Reserve in September (*CB*). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was photographed along the Old Matsiloje road south-east of Francistown on 22 November (*MS*). A juvenile **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was seen at Gaborone Game Reserve on 21–22 December (*IW*) and a **Pallid Harrier** *C. macrourus* in Khutse Game Reserve on 28 November (*CV*). A pair of **Black Sparrowhawks** *Accipter melanoleucus* was between Crocodile Pools, Ngotwane, and Ramotsa on 7 July (*CB*) and one was also regularly seen near Maun in late December–early January (*MM*). **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* were seen in Khutse Game Reserve on 28 November (*CV*) and a **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo* north of Sua in early December (*CB*).

African Crakes *Crex egregia* were frequent along the northern edge of Lake Ngami in late December (*CB*). An estimated 2,000–3,000 **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* were at the same lake in August (*MM, AF, CB, ST*). In early December, *c.*100 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were 20 km east of Sua Spit within Nata Sanctuary, Makgadikgadi Pans (*CB*); a group of 4–8 was seen at Segakwana Dam, in the south-east, on 24 and 26 December (*IW*), 180 at Bokaa Dam on 10 January, and one at Thagale Dam on 23 January (*CB*). A **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Lake Ngami on 17 August was early. Thirty-six **Common Ringed Plovers** *C. hiaticula* were at Bokaa Dam on 18 October. At Nata Delta, a single **Chestnut-banded Plover** *C. pallidus* and four **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* were seen on 10 August (*CB*). **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* were present along the Kwando River in the Caprivi on 27 October (one), at Mowana on 1 November (two), and at the sewage works west of Gang in early November (one) (per *TH*). A **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* was at Bokaa Dam on 19 September, with two there on 18 October (*CB*). **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* records include two at Lake Ngami in late December (*CB*), one at Phakalane sewage ponds in early January (per *IW*) and two at Bokaa Dam on 10 January (*CB*). Due to high water levels, there were few records of **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris*, but on the Okavango River, where levels were dropping by mid July, two were observed between Mohembo and Shakawe Lodge on 18 July and ten between Phillipo Channel junction, one at the Nxamaseri turn-off and three on the Phillipo Channel on 19 July (*PH et al.*); at least one was at Mowana Lodge, Kasane and on the Chobe River within the park on 26–27 August (*HH*).

An **African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* was calling at Ngotwane, south of Gaborone, on 28 September—a very early date. Also there, a **Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* was calling on 29 September. Of note was a pair of **Grey-headed Kingfishers** *Halcyon leucocephala* at Kumakwane, in the Gabane Hills, on 1 November (*CB, MG et al.*); this is a summer visitor mainly to northern Botswana. A **Black Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga flava* south of Gaborone on 25 September is an early record. A single **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* on a lawn at Chobe Safari Lodge, Kasane, on 12 November (*RR*) was only the fourth record for Botswana. Along the Thamalakane River in Maun, 5–6 **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* were heard in early January (*MM, RR*).

Cameroon

Records from Domaine de Petpenoun, near Foumban, West Province, in October 2009, include eight **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata*, on lower Petpenoun Lake (larger numbers occur on nearby Bamenjin reservoir) and a pair of **Fox Kestrels** *Falco alopex* in the crater of the extinct volcano Mbapit. There are rather few records of these species from the area (*JvdW*).

Canary Islands

Records from May–November 2009 include the following. On Lanzarote, **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* were observed off Arrecife on 27 May (one), at Costa Teguise on 7 July (two), and again off Arrecife on 14 November (a first-year). A **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* was at Erjor Ponds, Tenerife, on 18 August. A **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* was picked up exhausted on Gran Canaria on 2 October and, after fully recovering, was released on 25 October and seen again next day.

Noteworthy waders include a juvenile **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Las Martela ponds, La Palma, on 19 October, an adult **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* at Charca de Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 6–8 August, a juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* at an irrigation pond near El Médano, Tenerife, on 7 October, and a juvenile **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* near Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, on 22–24 August.

A **Bar-tailed Lark** *Ammomanes cinctura* was found with a Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* near Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, on 9 October. Single **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* were observed on Lanzarote from 23 October to 19 November at least and at Betancuria, Fuerteventura, on 15 November (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 317, 370–383; *Birding World* 22: 236, 279, 373, 416, 456).

Egypt

In April–October 2009 the following were reported. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was seen near Surnaka Island, south of the Ras Banas peninsula, on 7 August (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 313). Two **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were seen again north of Bir Shalatin in October (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 370). An **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* photographed on Crocodile Island, Luxor, on 26 May will be the first for Egypt, if accepted (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 253). At El Gouna golf course, at least three **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were seen on 9 April and a **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* on 9–13 May (per *Sandgrouse* 31: 209–210). Up to three **Three-banded Plovers** *C. tricollaris* were found at Aswan on 9–10 September. The first **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* reported in autumn 2009 was as early as 12 September (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 317–319).

Ethiopia

The following records are from November 2009. A first-winter **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* was photographed at Lake Awassa on 12 November; there are very few records in Ethiopia (Fig. 3; *AB*). At Dinsho, in the Bale Mountains, an **African Long-eared Owl** *Asio abyssinicus* was also photographed (Fig. 4; *SR*); this generally uncommon species is locally common in Ethiopia. More than ten **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* were claimed from the Bilen area on 25 November; Ash & Atkins

Figure 3. First-winter Slender-billed Gull / Goéland railleur *Larus genei*, Lake Awassa, Ethiopia, 12 November 2009 (Artur Bujanowicz)

Figure 4. African Long-eared Owl / Hibou d'Abyssinie *Asio abyssinicus*, Dinsho, Ethiopia, November 2009 (Steve Rooke / www.sunbirdtours.co.uk)

Figure 5. Grey-headed Silverbill / Capucin à tête grise *Lonchura griseicapilla*, Yabello, Ethiopia, 15 November 2009 (Kris Blachowiak)

Figure 6. Wilson's Phalarope / Phalarope de Wilson *Phalaropus tricolor*, Cape Lopez, Gabon, 10 October 2009 (Guillaume Passavy)

Figure 7. Red Phalarope / Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius*, near Georgetown, Central River Division, The Gambia, 12 November 2009 (John Cooper)

Figure 8. Eurasian Bittern / Butor étoilé *Botaurus stellaris*, near the White Volta, Ghana, 4 December 2009 (Daphne Gemmill)

(2009. *Birds of Ethiopia & Eritrea*) mention only a single record. A male **Ménétries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* observed at Lalibela on 29 November represents a new site for this rarely observed *Sylvia*. A **Grey-headed Silverbill** *Lonchura griseicapilla* was photographed at Yabello on 15 November; there are few records of this uncommon species (Fig. 5; *AB*).

Gabon

A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was photographed at Cape Lopez on 10 October 2009 (Fig. 6; *GP*).

The following records from the south-west, all outside the range indicated on the distribution maps in Borrow & Demey (2004. *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*), are from late December 2009–January 2010. An adult **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was observed near Moupia, south of Franceville, on 11 January and a juvenile at Gare de Moanda on 14th. A **Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus*, perhaps losely associated with numerous Red-headed Lovebirds *A. pullarius*, was seen in Moanda town on 6 January. About 250 **African River Martins** *Pseudochelidon eurystomina* were perched on wires in Bakoumba, south-west of Moanda, on 3 January, whilst singles, in the company of other hirundines, were seen at Moyabi, near Moanda, on 7th, at Mounana on 8th, and at

7

8

Lekoni bridge, on the Franceville–Okondja Road at Onvouri-Oulinga, on 10th. Several **Mountain Wagtails** *Motacilla clara* were on a stream just west of Kessala along the Franceville–Kessala road on 9 January. A pair of **Violet-tailed Sunbirds** *Anthreptes aurantium* was observed at Eaux Claires near Lekoni on 29 December and several **Reichenbach's Sunbirds** *Anabathmis reichenbachii* in swamps at the outskirts of Moanda on 3 January and at Franceville on 9th. Several **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* were seen on African Buffaloes *Syncerus caffer* near Moupia, south of Franceville, on 11 January. On 31 December, a small flock of **Zebra Waxbills** *Sporaeginthus subflavus* was recorded outside Lekoni town (*KD*).

The Gambia

A belated report, from November 2008, concerns a pair of **Common Moorhens** *Gallinula chloropus* breeding and producing six young at Kartong, Western Division (WD); this is the first definite breeding record for the country. Also there, single **Great Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* were mist-netted on 25 and 28 April 2009; there are few previous records (*JH*).

In July 2009–January 2010 the following were reported. A **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* stayed at Kotu, WD, in December–January; this species is rarely seen on the coast (per *KR*). Twenty **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were observed near River Gambia National Park, Central River Division (CRD), on 24 January (*MSe*); although still rare, this species is being increasingly recorded. A **Bat Hawk** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* was at Lamin Kotu, WD, on 5 November. Thirty adult **Rüppell's Vultures** *Gyps rueppellii* bathing near N'jau, CRD, on 6 November is a remarkably large number at the end of the rains (per *CBa*). An **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* was seen at Tanku Bolong, Bao Bolon Wetland Reserve, North Bank Division, on 5 January (*WT*); there are an increasing number of reports of this species, which was formerly considered rare, from a variety of wooded habitats in The Gambia. A **Little Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* was observed at Farasuto, WD, on 7 December; this species is rarely seen (*CBa*). On 17 November, two **Senegal Lapwings** *Vanellus lugubris* were at a small pool near Lamin Lodge, WD (*PS*). A **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was feeding in rice fields at Jahally Swamp, near Georgetown, CRD, on 12 November (Fig. 7; *JC*). At Wassu, CRD, a **Red-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus ruficollis* corpse was found on the road on 5 November (*CBa*). A **Black-and-white Mannikin** *Lonchura bicolor* was reliably reported by a ranger at Brufut, WD, on 12 July (*AJ*); this would be the first record for The Gambia, if accepted.

Ghana

The following records are from late November–early December 2009. A **Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was photographed at a flooded pan near the White Volta on 4 December (Fig. 8). At Sakumo Lagoon, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was observed on 21 November. A male **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* was found in the Tongon Hills on 6 December and a **Western Bonelli's Warbler***Phylloscopus bonelli* was near Tono Dam on 5th; subsequently four were seen there. **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis annamarulae* was seen again in Atewa Forest (where it was discovered in 2006: see *Bull. ABC* 15: 95–96) on 8 December. Two **White-billed Buffalo Weavers** *Bubalornis albirostris* were east of Bolgatanga on 5 December, whilst two **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were in the Tongon Hills on 6th (*DH*).

Guinea

In November–December 2009, a search for **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* was conducted at 11 sites in the Fouta Djalon, from 'La Dame du Mali' in the north to Dalaba in the south. The species was encountered only at Dalaba, where five pairs were located in a small and threatened forest behind the old colonial governor's residence in the centre of town (10°40'N 12°16'W), at 1,196–1,314 m, on 11–12 December (*MBC* & *KS*). There is only one previous record of Sierra Leone Prinia in the Fouta Djalon, involving a single pair near Dalaba at 1,160 m in October 1999 (see *Bull. ABC* 13: 45–48).

Kenya

The following reports are from July–December 2009, with additional records from April–June 2009 not mentioned in previous Recent Reports. Several **White-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon lepturus* were seen off Kiwaiyu, north of Lamu, in early November; this species is probably more common than reports suggest, due to the lack of observers at sea. A **Eurasian Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Lake Baringo Club on 18 April—this species is uncommon in the Rift Valley; two

were observed in Kakamega Forest on 22–23 September and a third near Kisumu on 25 September—it is normally only occasional in western Kenya. An **Ovampo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis*, a scarce species in Kenya, was seen at Kichwa Tembo, Masai Mara, on 25 April. An adult female **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *A. nisus* was photographed in Tsavo West National Park (=NP) on 17 November (Fig. 9); this probably overlooked species is only recorded every few years. In 2009, there were several records of **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* in Nairobi, where it is normally rare.

Displaying **Red-winged Francolins** *Francolinus levaillantii* were observed on the Keekorok road, Masai Mara, on 26 April; this is the first record in Kenya for over 20 years. Two juvenile **Allen's Gallinules** *Porphyrio alleni* on a pond at Nguu Tatu, Mombasa, on 15 August, are suggestive of breeding. A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was at Sukari Dam, Brookside Dairies, Thika, on 23 September; this species is very rarely recorded in Kenya. A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* on the beach at Watamu, on 5–6 November, is the first record there for many years. A **Eurasian Thick-knee** *Burhinus oedicnemus* was photographed near Lukenya, Machakos, on 15 November (Fig. 10); this is the first record in Kenya for many years. Four **Madagascar Pratincoles** *Glareola ocularis* at Sabaki on 4 April is an early date. A flock of *c.*50 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Aruba, Tsavo East NP, on 16 September, is an unusually high number for eastern Kenya. A **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* at Lake Jilore, Malindi, on 5 April, is noteworthy as there are relatively few coastal records.

Seven **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* in Nairobi NP on 20 June suggest a local influx to an area where the species is rare. Also in Nairobi NP, a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was seen on 3 May (second inland record) and an immature **Eurasian Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on 21 September (an early date). An adult **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was ringed at Lions Bluff, Lumo Conservancy, Taita, on 21 November. Another late record is a **Forbes-Watson's Swift** *Apus berliozi* at Arabuko-Sokoke on 4 April. On 4 August, a **Bar-tailed Trogon** *Apaloderma vittatum* was photographed in Masai Mara, where the species is rarely recorded.

Friedmann's Larks *Mirafra pulpa* were reported in Shaba National Reserve on 15 April (three) and in Tsavo West NP on 20 November (at least three singing). If accepted, two **Greater Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* behind Turtle Bay Beach Club, Watamu, on 5 November, will be the third record for Kenya. A **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* of the Palearctic race *rufula* was ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 19 December; this will be the first record of this race for East Africa, if accepted. A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* of the white-headed race *leucocephala* was seen on Solio Ranch on 16 April—this race is very uncommon in Kenya; an adult *flava*-type in Nairobi NP on 13 September was very early. Three **Sharpe's Longclaws** *Macronyx sharpei* were observed in grasslands 11 km west of Molo near the Mau Forest, on the western escarpment, on 16 August; this endemic is mostly reported from the highlands east of the Rift. A **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 20 December, is only the 12th to be ringed there since 1969, during which time almost half a million birds have been ringed at this well-known site. An adult female **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* stayed in Nairobi NP from 20 June to 28 August; it is unusual for this species to over-summer.

An *Acrocephalus* ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 17 December had all the features of **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *A. dumetorum*; blood samples are being analysed and if the results and the description are accepted, this will be the first record for Africa. Further noteworthy records from Nairobi NP include a **Grey Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus caroli* on 13 November (possibly the first since 1971), a **Red-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* on 20 June, a **Blue-capped Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus cyanocephalus* on 13 September (first record) and a **Somali Bunting** *Emberiza poliopleura* on 14 August (second record). Two or three pairs of Blue-capped Cordon-bleus were found atop the Limuru-Mai Mahiu escarpment, at 2,200 m; perhaps the birds were driven there by the drought, as it is very unusual for this species to occur at this altitude (per *CJ*).

Liberia

In Sapo National Park, **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* appeared in a remarkably high proportion of photographs taken by camera-traps in 2009; this Upper Guinea forest endemic is considered rare at the site (*BC*).

Madeira

Records from late April–November 2009 include the following. During an expedition on 20–29 April, 13 **Zino's Petrels** *Pterodroma madeira* were observed at sea off Madeira, of which four were photographed; full details concerning their identification will be published in due course. Daily maximum counts of seabirds off Porto Moniz during the first week of September included 3,482 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea borealis* on 1 September, 5,072 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* on 2nd and 862 **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* on 6th. A **Wilson's Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* was seen off Deserta Grande on 27 August. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was observed south of Funchal on 3 and 7 August. The first **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* for Madeira involved an immature photographed between Funchal and Bugio on 1 September.

Single **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* were at Porto da Cruz on 7 July and Machico on 18 July, whilst juvenile **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* were noted at Ribeiro Salgado on 6 October and on Porto Santo on 7 October. Three **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were seen at Tanque on 4 October. A female-type **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa*

remained at Ribeira de Janela from 27 October until late November at least, whilst three **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* stayed at Lugar de Baixo throughout November. The long-staying first **Green-winged Teal** *A. (crecca) carolinensis* for the island was still at Ribeira da Janela in November, and the second at Lugar de Baxio was still there in July. A **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was observed at Tanque on 4 October.

On 20 July, a **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was at Ponta do Pargo. A pale-morph **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* photographed at Ribeira de Janela on 14 and 16 August was the fourth for Madeira. A **Peregrine Falcon** *F. peregrinus* was at Ponta do Pargo on 10–13 October. The third **Barbary Falcon** *F. peregrinoides* for the island was photographed on Porto Santo on 31 August; probably the same bird was seen there again on 5 October. A **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* that remained at Porto Moniz from 7 July to 28 August at least is reportedly the second for Madeira. Three adult **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* flew past Porto Moniz on 24 August and three **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba* were observed at Machico on 7 July (per *Birding World* 22: 204–218, 279, 329, 416, 455; *Dutch Birding* 31: 253, 311–317, 370).

Mauritania

In 2009, a juvenile **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*, satellite-tracked from Hungary to Spain and Portugal, migrated south along Morocco's coast (see below) and arrived at Banc d'Arguin in October (see www.sakerlife.mme.hu/en/gmap; per *Dutch Birding* 31: 373); there are few records of the species in the country.

Morocco

Records from the period April–November 2009 are as follows. A **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* found at Essaouira on 18 April was still present on 13 November. In 2009, **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* succesfully raised young at Sidi Bou-Rhaba, Kénitra, where at least seven were counted on 4 October; this accidental visitor was a resident until at least the early part of the 20th century, but occasional breeding was considered likely following the recent increase in numbers in Spain. A satellite-tracked **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*, a juvenile from Hungary, flew via Spain and Portugal to Morocco; Thévenot *et al.* (2003. *The Birds of Morocco*) mention just two certain previous records, one collected in the late 19th century and another captured in May 1963. Two adult **Grey-hooded Gulls** *Larus cirrocephalus* were photographed at Oued Souss, Agadir, on 19–21 May. In July, **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans* continued to be seen between Dakhla and Awserd. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was reported from Goulimime on 11 November (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 317, 370–383; *Birding World* 22: 279).

Mozambique

In little-known Quirimbas National Park, Capo Delgado province, northern Mozambique, some unusual records were made in 2008–09 which were either 'firsts' for Mozambique or for the park. A **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens* was claimed from Taratibo on 24 October 2008, with two along the main road near the park headquarters at Biaque. There were also two **Southern Banded Snake Eagles** *C. fasciolatus* at Mareja and one along the road to Guludo. These two species are usually considered allopatric but apparently occur together in the park; the former would be new for the Mozambique list. On Matemo Island, a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was seen on 24 October 2008. A **Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus* was photographed on Situ Island in February 2008, five were seen at Tandanhangue in March 2008, and more were photographed on 14 January 2009 (Fig. 11); these are the first records for Mozambique and apparently the southernmost for the species. A pair of **Ulunguru Violet-backed Sunbirds** *Anthreptes neglectus* was observed at Taratibo on 25 October 2008. **Gorgeous Bushshrikes** *Malaconotus quadricolor* (=*Telophorus viridis*) are quite common at Nemau and on Ibo Island, although not mapped for this area on distribution maps.

Other noteworthy records from the north-east include two **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* at Lake Kagevero, one at Bilibiza on 30 May 2008 and one at Tandanhangue on 15 April 2009, a **Horus Swift** *Apus horus* at Pemba on 9 April 2009, two **Mascarene Martins** *Phedina borbonica* at Marerja on 2 June 2008, and a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* south of Pemba on 16 October 2009 (very few previous records for the country, all from the south; *cf. Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa* 2005: 949–950). About 100 **African Paradise Flycatchers** *Terpsiphone viridis* congregated at Pemba on 9 April 2009 (*MW*).

More southern records, for the period September–December 2009, include the following. Single **Eurasian Honey Buzzards** were reported from the Panda area in early November and near Inhamitanga in December. A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was recorded at Gorongosa National Park in September. At Inhambane, **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were seen again in September and early November. The Panda area also produced a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* in early November. A **'Lesser' Cuckoo** *Cuculus* sp. was reported near Chinuzua in December; unfortunately, the bird was not calling nor did it respond to any playback, and the photographs will not enable positive identification: Asian Lesser Cuckoo *C. poliocephalus* and Madagascar Cuckoo *C. rochii* are indeed extremely difficult to separate reliably (per *TH*).

Namibia

Records from July–December 2009 include the following. A trip aboard a bottom trawler off the coast of the north of the country (more or less at the latitude of Etosha National

Figure 9. Eurasian Sparrowhawk / Épervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus*, Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, 17 November 2009 (Toby Collett)

Figure 10. Eurasian Thick-knee / Œdicnème criard *Burhinus oedicnemus*, near Lukenya, Machakos, Kenya, 15 November 2009 (Phoebe Munyoro)

Figure 11. Northern Carmine Bee-eaters / Guêpiers écarlates *Merops nubicus*, Situ Island, Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique, 14 January 2009 (Tess Macdonald)

Park) in July produced three **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans* and at least four **Spectacled Petrels** *Procellaria* (*aequinoctialis*) *conspicillata*. A **Tristan Albatross** *D.* (*exulans*) *dabbenena* was seen offshore on 3 August; the bird was ringed and appeared to be from the colony on Gough Island. Another individual was photographed just beyond the 200 nautical mile limit in August. These waters also produced a **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca* and a **Blue Petrel** *Halobaena caerulea*, the latter probably one of the northernmost records of this species (per *TH*). A **Madeiran Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma castro* was photographed on Halifax Island just off Luderitz in mid October (*JK* & *JPR* per *TH*).

In early November, a **Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiaceus* was observed *c.*50 km west of Katima Mulilo, in the easternmost Caprivi Strip; this species is normally restricted to north-western Namibia. A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* stayed in Walvis Bay from late September to December at least. Up to three **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were present at Mile 4 Salt Works north of Swakopmund throughout the period, with one also at Walvis Bay from late October. Three **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were at Walvis Bay on 11–12 July; this is generally a scarce species here and decidedly rare in winter. Walvis Bay also held **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* on 11–12 July (ten) and again from late September to December, with up to 31 on 12 November and still up to 15 in mid December (one still in breeding plumage). Also there was a **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* (initially in full breeding plumage) from 23 September until December at least.

In the Caprivi, a **Ross's Turaco** *Musophaga rossae* was seen on Ntwala Island, near Impalila Island, in mid October; if photographs can be obtained, this would constitute the first substantiated record of the species in southern Africa. A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was observed east of Luderitz in July; not only is this further south than its normal range, but the time of year is also odd. On 22 November, a **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* was located at Monte Christo Guest Farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek; this is more than 400 km south of this species' regular range in the country.

A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* was reported at Popa Falls in October (apparently the sixth record for Namibia) and on Friedental farm, *c.*80 km south-west of Windhoek, in early December (per *TH*). **Shelley's Sunbird** *Cinnyris shelleyi* was seen again in the north, at Shamvura Lodge, Kavango, on 23 September (*ID*). Of regional interest is a pair of **Village Indigobirds** *Vidua chalybeata* (of the white-billed race *okavangoensis*) at Avis Dam, just outside Windhoek, on 20 December; the nearest known resident population is in the Okavango Delta, at least 650 km to the north-east, but it is perhaps not that surprising given the recent colonisation of Red-billed Firefinches *Lagonosticta senegala*, its primary host, in the Windhoek area (per *TH*).

Niger

During a field trip by the Sahara Conservation Fund Termit project 44 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were seen on 16 August 2009 north of Gouré, in south-east Niger (*CN* per *JB*); there are very

few recent records in Niger, all of singles or very small groups. In autumn 2009, a satellite-tracked **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* flew from Romania to its wintering grounds in Angola via Niger (see www.kekvercse.mme.hu/en/gmap). Photographs of a juvenile taken near Termit on 20 February 2004, whilst one or two other individuals were observed nearby, subsequently came to light (*TW*); this was very early in the year, suggesting that some may winter in West rather than southern Africa. A **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo* from Germany took a similar route via Niger to Angola and Zambia in autumn 2008 (see www.raptor-research.de/); of this species, too, there are only a handful of observations in Niger (*JB*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

A belated record has been received of an adult **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* at an artificial lake next to São Tomé airport from 20 November 2007 to 31 January 2008 at least (*SA*, *MMe*); the first record for São Tomé, from January 2003, was at the same site (*Bull. ABC* 11: 77).

Senegal

The following were recorded during field work in the Khossanto–Bambaraya–Sabodala area, north of Kédougou, in the extreme south-east, in July–August and November 2009. The first **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* for the country was discovered at a reservoir on 29 July; there are very few records from neighbouring countries west of the Inner Niger Delta in Mali. At the same dam, a male **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* on 29 July and 1–2 males and one female on 4 August are the first records for the south-east. Also there was an immature **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* on 14 November; this species is rarely observed inland. A **Little Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* was flushed from the long grass at the reservoir's edge on 4 August; this species is known from relatively few records in the country, mainly from the north. Also new for the south-east were **African Crake** *Crex egregia* (singles observed at three localities), **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* (three at the reservoir) and **Purple Swamphen** *P. porphyrio* (up to four at the reservoir), all in July–August. A foraging **Adamawa Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* was observed at Khossanto on 25 July, whilst in the dry season, in November, four singing birds were found at three other sites; these are new localities for this inadequately known species, which has been recorded in Niokolo-Koba to the west and in south-west Mali to the east. In the rainy season, at least nine singing **Dorst's Cisticolas** *Cisticola guinea* were recorded; all were silent in November. Small numbers of **Croaking Cisticolas** *C. natalensis* were seen throughout; there are remarkably few records in Senegambia of this species. A male **Heuglin's Masked Weaver** *Ploceus heuglini* in breeding plumage was with a mixed-species flock on 14 July; this species was not mapped for the south-east. Two **Mali Firefinches** *Lagonosticta virata* were found on a rocky hillside on 20–22 November (*RD*).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from mid-June to mid-November 2009 include the first record of **Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma aterrima*, one on Cousin on 10–11 June 2009. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* at Roche Caiman Bird Sanctuary, Mahé, on 3 April–26 June was the fourth report for Seychelles. Single **Indian Pond Herons** *A. grayii* on Alphonse on 30–31 October, on Desroches on 11 November and on Denis Island on 10 December 2007 (details received late) were the fifth to seventh reports for Seychelles. A remarkable number of **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* were reported on Desroches, beginning with one on 18 October, rising to ten the following day, declining to five on 20 October, with one remaining until 25 October. Of 16 previous records, 14 involved solitary birds, whilst the remaining two involved two individuals, and no sightings have been made over such a sustained period, the majority being present on one day only. There was also a Common Swift at Alphonse on 19 October.

Also of interest were a **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* on Paul Island, St. Joseph Atoll, on 10 November and another at Beau Vallon, Mahé, on 15 November (13 previous accepted records), a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* on Alphonse on 22 October and one on Desroches on 24 October (37 previous records), an adult **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* on Alphonse on 5 November (nine previous records), an adult **Black-winged Pratincole** *G. nordmanni* on Frégate on 12 June (seven previous records), a **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* at Roche Caiman, Mahé, on 23 September (27 previous records), a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on Aride on 12 October and two on Alphonse on 20 October–6 November (14 previous records), a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on Alphonse on 20–26 October (18 previous records), a **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* on Alphonse on 4–5 October (eight previous records), and an adult male **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* on D'Arros on 7 November (27 previous records) (*AS*).

South Africa

Records from July–December 2009 include the following. During pelagic trips south-west of Cape Point, 1–2 **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans*, 1–3 **Southern Royal Albatrosses** *D. epomophora* and 1–2 **Northern Royal Albatrosses** *D.* (*epomophora*) *sanfordi* were regularly seen in August–October, single **Grey-headed Albatrosses** *Thalassarche chrysostoma* in July, single white-morph **Southern Giant Petrels** *Macronectes giganteus* in July–September, 1–2 **Southern Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialoides* in August–October, and single **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes* in October. Also observed were an adult **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche* (*cauta*) *salvini c.*30 nautical miles south-west of Hout Bay on 9 August,

a **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* on 14 July and another in October, a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinis assimilis* a few miles off Cape Point on 1 August, a **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* in September, and a pale-morph **South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki* on 25 July.

The most interesting species seen within Western Cape waters during a 36-day fishing trip which returned to Cape Town on 8 September included **Wandering**, **Northern Royal** and **Southern Royal Albatrosses** (almost daily), 20 **Grey-headed Albatrosses**, *c.*10 **Sooty Albatrosses** *Phoebetria fusca*, four **Light-mantled Albatrosses** *P. palpebrata*, 20 **Blue Petrels** *Halobaena caerulea*, *c.*50 **Grey Petrels** *Procellaria cinerea*, a few **Little Shearwaters** (races *tunneyi* and *elegans*), a few probable **Salvin's Prions** *Pachyptila salvini*, several **Slender-billed Prions** *P. belcheri* and, best of all, at least one **Fairy Prion** *P. turtur*. A two-week trip in September 60–90 nautical miles south-west of Cape Point produced at least 35 **Wandering Albatrosses**, 12 **Northern** and six **Southern Royal Albatrosses**, a **Grey-headed Albatross**, two **Grey Petrels**, a **Blue Petrel** and a **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii*.

A juvenile **Northern Rockhopper Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysocome moseleyi* came ashore at Struisbaai in early August; the bird was weak and wounded, and was taken into care. Two tropicbirds seen briefly at St. Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 25 December, were suspected to be **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon rubricauda*. An **Australian Gannet** *Morus serrator* was on Malgas Island, Western Cape, on 24 August and from mid November until mid December at least. A **Cape Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax capensis* influx into coastal KwaZulu-Natal continued with an unprecedented count of 14 birds in Durban Bay on 6 August. In Eastern Cape, a **Crowned Cormorant** *P. coronatus* was on Bird Island in Algoa Bay in early August; this is at least 350 km further east than usual. An immature **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* soared over the Illovo River near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 21 December and, probably the same bird, over the Umgeni River mouth the next day.

In Northern Cape, four **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* were reported at Twee Rivieren in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in July. An influx of **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* occurred throughout the country in November–December; most records involved singles, but a group of over 20 was seen in Potchefstroom, North West. Sightings within the species' normal range suggest a marked increase, with reports of a flock of 200–300 at St. Lucia and over 1,000 near Skukuza, Kruger National Park (=NP). Records of regional interest include a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* at Grootvadersbosch Farm, Western Cape, in late August and single **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 August, and near Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 12 December. A pair of **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* was east of Letaba, Kruger NP, on 11 October. In Mpumalanga, a male **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* was found at Dullstroom Nature Reserve on 11 November.

Eurasian Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Phinda Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 8 November; Irene, Gauteng, in mid November; Swadini Resort, Limpopo, on 29 November; Newlands, Western Cape, on 2 December; Witwatersberg Mountain Range; Gauteng, on 10 December; Mokala NP, Northern Cape, on 13 December; and Mkhuze Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 16 December. Single **Palm-nut Vultures** *Gypohierax angolensis* were seen along the Mphongolo Loop, Kruger NP, on 27 August, and near Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 13 December, where, according to a local farmer, the bird has been present for at least two years. In Western Cape, an adult **Black-chested Snake Eagle** *Circaetus pectoralis* was located south of the Vredenberg–Paternoster road on 5 July and a **Brown Snake Eagle** *C. cinereus* at Vergelegen on 19 November. An **African Harrier Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* at Kimberley, Northern Cape, in July is of regional interest. Single **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus* were seen west of Kimberley in early October, and west of Alexandria, Eastern Cape, on 11 December. **Western Marsh Harriers** *C. aeruginosus* were reported from Phinda Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, in early October, and Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 22 November and 19 December, with a further two records from Vogelfontein on the same day and the Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain on 20 December. A female **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* was near Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 13 December.

An unseasonal **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* was near Ellisras, Limpopo, in late July; one at Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 30 August is a rather early record. A female **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was at Northern Farm, Gauteng, on 6 July; a sighting of this species at what is effectively a sewage works is rather unusual. In Western Cape, a **Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* was reported at Cape Agulhas from 9 September, whilst a pair was found in Bontebok NP in November. In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Red-crested Bustard** *Lophotis ruficrista* was in Nambiti Game Reserve, near Ladysmith, in November.

A **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, from 2 October until 11 October at least. A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* occurred in the Sundays River mouth area, Eastern Cape, in November. Of regional interest are **African Black Oystercatcher** *H. moquini* records from KwaZulu-Natal, in Durban on 8–9 August (one), Mpenjati estuary on 22 August (one) and Isipingo on 23 August (two). In the same province, a **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* was at the Umzumbe River estuary on 17–19 October. In Kruger NP, a pair of **Three-banded Coursers** *Rhinoptilus cinctus* was found breeding near

Pafuri in August; there are few breeding records in South Africa. A Three-banded Courser was present near Ngala Lodge, Limpopo, in mid December. A **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 13 December, was several hundred kilometres west of the species' normal distribution.

In West Coast NP, Western Cape, up to five **Lesser Sand Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* were present in August; at least one stayed until late November. Also there in August were three **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii*, with another three at Swartvlei, on the Garden Route, Western Cape, on 27 October. **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* were located in the Viljoenskroon area, Free State, on 13 September (one) and east of Nigel, Gauteng, on 14–29 November (up to nine). In Western Cape, a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* found at Velddrif on 12 August was still present on 24 September. Single **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were recorded in Kruger NP in late September–mid October, on 7 and 19 November, and 9 December; others were seen in Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 21 November, and at Ngala, Limpopo, on 18 December. A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was at Rondevlei, near Wildernis, Western Cape, on 18 October. In the same province, a **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* at Beaufort West sewage works on 11 October was a rather interesting find. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was at Soutvlei, Eastern Cape, on 13–19 November, and a **Red Phalarope** at Haarlem, in the Langkloof area, Western Cape, on 13 November.

An adult **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* in full breeding plumage was observed in West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 12 November and, probably the same bird, at Velddrif on 27–29 November. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was reported from a small wetland north-east of Kriel, Mpumalanga, on 31 July, whilst another, which was relocated at Orient Beach in East London, Eastern Cape, on 20 August after a nearly two-month absence, remained until early September at least. A group of 15–20 **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* was reported in a tern roost near Gansbaai, Western Cape, on 8–9 August. In the Eastern Cape, at least one **Antarctic Tern** *S. vittata* was still present in a tern roost near Gonubie Point, East London, on 14 August. The **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* at Cape Recife in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, was relocated on 7 July and still present a week later. A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* first reported from Bird Island, Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, in early June was still present on 4 August; on 3 November one was on Dyer Island near Gansbaai, Western Cape.

A **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx montanus* was reported from Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 21 November. In Northern Cape, up to four **Little Bee-eaters** *Merops pusillus* were in Rooipoort Nature Reserve, near Kimberley, in July. In Mpumalanga, an out-of-range **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *M. hirundineus* was discovered in the Beerlaagte area, north of Villiers, on 12 September; another was in Western Cape, where the species is rarely recorded, near Wildernis on 29 September. Two **White-fronted Bee-eaters** *M. bullockoides* in Augrabies Falls NP, Northern Cape, on 30 June, were probably the same two found there on 22 March; another out-of-range pair was reported near Aliwal North, Eastern Cape, in August. **Crested Barbets** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* were still in Augrabies in late October—a considerable westward range extension.

An **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 13 October, is a remarkable record. In North West, a **Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara* was in Tonqani Gorge, east of Rustenburg, on 26 October. Southern Africa's tenth **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* was at Futululu Park, near St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 August, and the 11th was at Mkuze Game Reserve, also in KwaZulu-Natal, on 3–4 October. In early August, a **Long-tailed Pipit** *Anthus longicaudatus* was observed west of Christiana, North West, with another at Garingboom, Free State. On 23 October, a male **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* was claimed from the Pafuri picnic site, Kruger NP. A **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and a moulting male **Long-tailed Paradise Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea* at Nossob, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, in mid December, were well out of range. A **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* in West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 16 December, is probably the same individual that has returned to this site for several successive seasons. The immature **Bush Blackcap** *Lioptilus nigricapillus* first found in a Heidelberg garden, south-east of Johannesburg, Gauteng, in June was still present in mid July. A **Malachite Sunbird** *Nectarinia famosa* at Kimberley, Northern Cape, in July, is of regional interest.

In Western Cape, a juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* was in West Coast NP on 22 November and an adult near Beaufort West on 20 December. A yellow-morph **Crimson-breasted Shrike** *Laniarius atrococcineus* has been regularly seen at Klipfontein Lodge, *c.*45 km from Klerksdorp, North West; this unusual form is normally quite difficult to find. A **Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* in Darling in October probably represents the first record on the west coast north of Cape Town. In Mpumalanga, an out-of-range a pair of **Yellow Weavers** *Ploceus subaureus* was found near Tonga on 20 August; this is the first record in the province since the mid-1970s. **Red-headed Finch** *Amadina erythrocephala*, recorded for the first time in Kruger NP in 2009, was still present in large numbers north of Satara in October. In Western Cape, a male **Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* was coming to a garden in Melkbos in late November–December. An eruption of **Lark-like Buntings** *Emberiza impetuani* occurred on the west coast in October–November,

with maximum numbers of over 1,000 being recorded in West Coast NP on 21–22 November; two on Robben Island on 5 November was a rather southerly record and only the second for the site (per *TH*).

Figure 12. Beaudouin's Snake Eagle / Circaète de Beaudouin *Circaetus beaudouini*, Kazinga Channel, Uganda, 26 July 2009 (Bernard Hanus)

Figure 13. Cape Shoveler / Canard de Smith *Anas smithii*, Chisamba IBA, Zambia, 15 July 2009 (Manfred Wichmann)

Figure 14. Spur-winged Lapwing / Vanneau à éperons *Vanellus spinosus*, Lion Camp, South Luangwa National Park, Zambia, 17 August 2009 (P. Bentley)

Uganda

Records in July–October 2009 include the following. A **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* was photographed at the Kazinga Channel on 26 July (Fig. 12; *HD*). On 23 October, in the south, a juvenile male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* and a **Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* were seen at Mityebili, south of Kyotera, and a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* in the Sango Bay area. Three **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata* were observed on Lake Victoria during a boat trip to the Sesse Islands, on 11 October, whilst on 31 October, **Common Teal** *Anas crecca*, **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* and **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* were noted en route to the lagoon at Lutembe (*RS*). The report of a pair of **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* in Lake Mburo National Park in July 2008 (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 111) has prompted an earlier record of a pair at the same locality on 19 September 2000 to be submitted (*AW*).

A **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was at Makerere University on 15 October (*RS*). Three **Yellow Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus parvulus* were seen just south of the Nile River in Murchison Falls National Park in July 2009 (*KV*); there have been other (as yet unpublished) reports from the area recently (per *NB*) and also one from the north-west of the country (*GP* per *NB*). At Kajansi, south of Kampala, four **Brown Twinspots** *Clytospiza monteiri* were seen on 24 September and a pair of **White-collared Olivebacks** *Nesocharis ansorgei* next day (*RS*).

Zambia

In 2009 the following were reported. **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* were found breeding at Siansowa Crocodile Farm, 40 km west of Sinazongwe, on 21 November; this is the first confirmed breeding record for Zambia (*BS*). A roost of *c.*100 **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* was found in reeds on the Lingongole River, Simungoma Important Bird Area (=IBA), on 11 August (*LR*). A pair of **Cape Shovelers** *Anas smithii* at Chisamba IBA, on 12–16 July (Fig. 13; *MW, KØ*) is the seventh record for the country. A **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* was at Lion Camp, South

Luangwa National Park, on 17–22 August (Fig. 14; *PB*); this is the most southerly record in Zambia of this rapidly spreading species. About 12 **Black Saw-wings** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* of the eastern race *orientalis* at Katombora Rapids, near Livingstone, on 28 July constitute the most westerly Zambian record by *c.*250 km (*BS*). A **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropsis daurica* of the Palearctic race *rufula* was mist-netted near Kabwe on 27 January (*BvdB*); this is the southernmost confirmed record in Africa of this race.

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Staffan Andersson (SA), Clive Barlow (CBa), P. Bentley (PB), Nik Borrow (NB), Nicky Bousfield (NBo), Chris Brewster (CB), Brian Bridges (BB), Doline Bridges (DB), Bennie van den Brink (BvdB), Joost Brouwer (JB), Grant Buckmaster (GB), Siobhan Buckmaster (SB), Artur Bujanowicz (AB), Ben Collen (BC), Mohamed Balla Condé (MBC), John Cooper (JC), John Dalziel (JD), Peter D'Arcy (PD'A), Ian Davidson (ID), Ron Demey (RD), Klaas-Douwe Dijkstra (KD), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Maria Eifler (ME), Ali Flatt (AF), B. Gerenamotse (BG), Daphne Goldsworthy (DG), Mike Goldsworthy (MG), Kevin Grant (KG), John High (JH), Glynis Humphrey (GH), Harold Hester (HH), Pete Hancock (PH), Trevor Hardaker (TH), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Aba Jarju (AJ), Jessica Kemper (JK), Doreen McColaugh (DMc), Martim Melo (MMe), Johannes Merz (JM), Sharon Merz (SM), Mark Muller (MM), Christian Noirard (CN), Pat Nurse (PN), Kaj Østergaard (KØ), Guillaume Passavy (GP), Bruno Portier (BP), Richard Randall (RR), Leslie Reynolds (LR), Steve Rooke (SR), Jean-Paul Roux (JPR), Kev Roy (KR), Paul Seligman (PS), Matt Selwinsky (MSe), Roger Skeen (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Mike Soroczynski (MS), Kadiatou Soumah (KS), Bob Stjernstedt (BS), Wande Touray (WT), Steph Tyler (ST), Keith Valentine / Rockjumper Birding Tours (KV), Cheryl Vroom (CV), Jaap van der Waarde (JvdW), Tim Wacher (TW), Ian Walker (IW), Manfred Wichmann (MW), Malcolm Wilson (MW), and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, Sandgrouse, *capebirdnet, SARareBirdAlert, www.zestforbirds.co.za and sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com.*

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Tenierslaan 24, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium and (preferably) by e-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com or recent_reports@africanbirdclub.org .

Reviews

Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea: An Atlas of Distribution

John Ash & John Atkins, 2009. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 464 pp, numerous photographs (16 pp in colour) and more than 872 maps. Hardback. ISBN: 978–1-4081–0979–3. UK£45.00.

For the scholar and discerning traveller alike, a good distributional atlas to the avifauna of a region is an invaluable key to unlocking its ornithological gems. The two countries, Ethiopia and Eritrea, covered by this well-produced book are most certainly an avian treasure house, with a grand total of 872 species having been recorded from within their boundaries. More than 30 of these are endemic to the region and most of these specialities are mouth-wateringly depicted in a photo gallery section.

These ancient lands are undeniably fascinating, possessing as they do a rich and colourful history, and superb natural scenery, albeit greatly modified by the effects of mankind. The lengthy Blue Nile commences its journey in Ethiopia flowing out from the enormous high inland Lake Tana that provides a livelihood for fishermen using their traditional papyrus boats before it tips its waters over the dramatic Tissisat Falls. The extensive highland plateau dissected by the Great Rift Valley covers an area that lies predominantly over 2,000 m and ultimately peaks at 4,620 m on Ras Deshen in the Simien Mountains. These lofty lands have acted as a natural fortress, both protecting and isolating, over the centuries. In contrast, at the base of these sheer, vertical cliffs stretch the lands that lead to the Danakil Desert, a desolate but equally mystifying place that reaches 110 m below sea level and is occupied by the fearsome Afar tribe. Although Ethiopia is landlocked, there are numerous rocky islands along the Eritrean coastline holding important seabird colonies. This is certainly a land of contrasts!

John Ash and John Atkins are indisputably both highly qualified to prepare this book for between them they have lived and worked in Ethiopia for a total of 15 years. Over the course of the past four decades, they have summarised their own records and included a huge number of sightings submitted by many of the other long- and short-term visitors to these countries. Impressively, they have also assimilated a mass of historical records (all well referenced in the concise bibliography).

This largish book (246 × 189 mm) is somewhat deeper than the norm but snuggles up perfectly on the bookshelf alongside John Ash and John Miskell's previous atlas and authoritative sister volume *Birds of Somalia*. This new book, however, is a much more refined and somewhat thicker volume containing 463 pages, the first 80 of which provide an excellent insight to Ethiopia and Eritrea's ornithology. An initial general introduction proffers a thumbnail sketch of culture and politics, and this is followed by well-researched, readable and informative essays covering such subjects as the history of bird-finding, topography, hydrography, geology, vegetation, climate, habitats, conservation and breeding habits, all generously illustrated with photographs and tables. A suite of coloured maps provides information on political boundaries, topography, geology, rainfall and notable localities including national parks and wildlife refuges. The physical situation of these two countries and the dramatic nature of the terrain have an obvious effect on migrants moving in and out of Africa, making the chapter on migration especially interesting.

It looks into where these birds are coming from and outlines the status of each species within the region, as well as giving information on their arrival and departure dates, all of which will be immensely useful to the visitor.

The bulk of the book comprises the atlas and species accounts. Sequence and nomenclature generally follow *The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (Dickinson 2003) although some English names have been changed to fall into line with the choices made in the recently published and essential companion field guide *Birds of the Horn of Africa* (Redman *et al.* 2009). Therefore, there are no great surprises taxonomically and the book is as up to date as possible, and rightly no longer treats 'Degodi' Lark *Mirafra degodiensis* as a species but as a form of Gillett's Lark *M. gilletti*.

Three species are laid out per page, the text for each being accompanied by a large-scale, monochrome ochre-coloured map indicating basic topographical contours and major rivers. On a grid of half-degree squares, each species' presence is clearly recorded by the presence of black (breeding) or white (sight) circles with other symbols being used for uncertain sightings or unconfirmed breeding records. The layout is exceedingly pleasing to the eye and the superimposed data are

clear and very easy to read against the background map, which although strongly coloured is not obtrusive.

The written account confirms the species' presence in either one or both of the countries and endemic species are highlighted. Sadly, a more global indication of a species' range and distribution is not included. However, all subspecies known to occur in the area are taken into account and where there is more than one race represented then the known boundaries between the forms are outlined in black on the map. With migrants such as Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, where multiple races overlap and ranges cannot be so defined then the known status in either country is stated. Information on breeding is briefly summarised and succinctly covers laying dates and clutch size. There is a wealth of information given in a relatively small space and, from each account, there is enough to inform the reader in which habitat to find the species, what altitude it prefers, habits where relevant, migratory movements and often exact localities to look for the birds. Appendices cover hybridisation, potential and rejected species lists, Important Bird Areas, ringing and a very thorough gazetteer.

This excellent atlas summarises a wealth of field experience from real authorities and all that is known to date from the literature about the distribution of birds in these two exciting countries. Both clear and precise, it sets a new high standard in works of this kind and definitely forms a benchmark. It is a fitting monument to John Ash's long-standing work and discoveries in the region, and is thus an absolutely essential reference for anyone interested in the countries. For many years now Ethiopia has been an increasingly popular tourist destination for those interested in its wildlife and culture. I would recommend this atlas to any potential visitor, as it will provide the perfect overview to the distribution of a rich avifauna and a superb aid as to where to find the special birds.

Nik Borrow

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Living on the Edge: Wetlands and Birds in a Changing Sahel

Leo Zwarts, Rob G. Bijlsma, Jan van der Kamp & Eddy Wymenga, 2009. Zeist: KNNV Publishing. 564 pp, numerous photographs, drawings, figures, tables and maps. Hardback. ISBN 978-90-5011-280-2. €64.95 (www.knnvpublishing.nl) or UK£87 (NHBS).

This hefty and beautifully produced volume truly is a superb book. It mainly focuses on the ecology of Palearctic birds in the Sahel and offers a fascinating synthesis of numerous studies and the authors' own field work, conducted between 1982 and early 2009. Their field work began as low-budget affairs, partly financed by the participants themselves, but have since developed into larger-scale projects encompassing several West African countries. The authors' statement that 'Paid, underpaid or unpaid, the passion remained the same' shines through on every page.

Each year, hundreds of millions of birds breeding in Europe undertake the daunting journey south to sub-Saharan Africa, where they spend the greater part of their lives, mainly in the *c.*500 km-wide band of northern savannahs stretching 5,500 km from west to east. Although this habitat can appear superficially poor and dry, especially during the Palearctic migrants' stay, it is actually a complex ecosystem, where seasonal variations in the leafing, flowering and fruiting of trees and shrubs provide food and shelter for birds throughout the northern winter, i.e. the region's dry season. Survival here depends mainly on unpredictable rainfall in the short wet season and the flood extent of the inundated areas. Droughts, whose frequency and duration have increased since 1969, have a huge adverse impact on birds, which has been magnified by negative habitat changes associated with human population growth, such as deforestation, reclamation of wetlands and irrigation. Additionally, overgrazing and hunting take their toll. It should therefore not come as a surprise that population numbers of 75 out of 127 trans-Saharan migrants are decreasing, with those wintering in the Sahel suffering the strongest declines.

The book, which pays tribute to the ideas aired by Reg Moreau—the 'forefather of African ecology'—in *The Palaearctic–African Bird Migration Systems* (1972), documents and analyses the multiple problems faced by trans-Saharan migrants. It does so extremely thoroughly and in a highly readable and attractive form, despite the huge amount of information presented and the often-sad message. The whole is lavishly illustrated in full colour throughout, with hundreds of clear diagrams and maps, 35 tables and nearly 500 excellent and functional photographs—even the index has delightful bird drawings, by Jos Zwarts, at the bottom of every page! The language occasionally betrays that the book was written by Dutch researchers, but the overall quality of the work is of such a high standard that to mention it is almost nit-picking.

First, rainfall, rivers, vegetation and land use in the Sahel are presented, followed by chapters on the major wetlands: the Inner Niger Delta, the Senegal Delta, the Hadejia-Nguru floodplains, the Lake Chad Basin, the Sudd and the rice fields. Next are 27 chapters devoted to single bird species, selected to identify events pivotal to numerical fluctuations, such as migration strategies, distribution and habitat selection in Africa, and changing conditions on the breeding grounds. These species range from Grey *Ardea cinerea* and Purple Herons *A. purpurea* through Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Eurasian

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* to Lesser *Sylvia curruca* and Common Whitethroats *S. communis*. A chapter, by Wim Mullié, gives an overview of recent outbreaks of locusts and grasshoppers and the use of chemical pesticides for their control, explains the ecology of these insects in the region, and discusses bird–acridid relationships and the 'ecological service' provided by birds by suppressing acridid populations. The book concludes with a discussion of the impact of ecological changes in the Sahel on Eurasian bird population trends. Evidence accumulated over many years of field work, like that by the authors, indicates that population fluctuations of several species are indeed largely determined by rainfall and flood extent in the Sahel. This, coupled with changes in the breeding areas and stopover sites along migration routes, leaves little scope for optimism. Nevertheless, Leo Zwarts and his co-workers hope, 'against their own better judgement', that their negative predictions will prove incorrect and that Afro-Palearctic birds will be sufficiently resilient to cope with the changes.

New data constantly lead to new lines of research, whilst a lot of questions remain unresolved. Fortunately, for what is known on Palearctic birds in the Sahel we now have an excellent synthesis which constitutes a milestone for ecological studies in the region. This outstanding book is a splendid achievement for which the authors and publisher are to be congratulated.

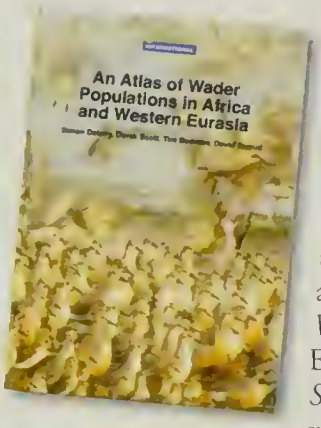
Ron Demey

An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia

Simon Delany, Derek Scott, Tim Dodman & David Stroud (eds.), 2009. Wageningen: Wetlands International. 521 pp, many colour photographs and maps. Hardback. ISBN 78–90–5882–047–1. UK£70.

Over ten years in the 'making', this atlas has been well worth the wait. It collates the vast amount of information stored in the Wetlands International databases, as well as drawing on an extensive bibliography. Not only does it map individual species distributions but also provides population estimates and identifies key sites according to various criteria including the 1% population level, cold weather and drought refuges, presence of globally threatened species and whether there may be a high degree of turnover of the population during passage periods. The maps of key sites in Europe and especially Africa are fascinating and really highlight the importance of areas such as the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania and the Senegal and Niger River deltas.

Most people will turn straight to the species accounts. Ninety species were considered, ranging from the probably extinct Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* and the rare endemic St Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* to more abundant species such as Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. A summary of the different races is given along with a map of key sites and a description of the routes taken by different populations. These maps reveal the complexity of migration undertaken by these shorebirds. Individuals from the same Siberian breeding area could end up on the east or west coast of Africa, thousands of kilometres from each other or, conversely, birds in the same South African wintering area could breed in parts of the Arctic many thousand of kilometres apart.

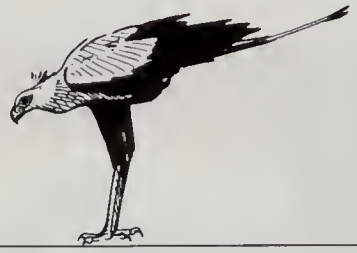


For many Afrotropical species we don't understand the distribution or population sizes particularly well. Some African countries are not covered by any counts leaving huge gaps in coverage for parts of Central and North Africa. For many species such as Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*, which tend to be widely spread in suitable habitats from West to East Africa, population estimates tend to be informed guesses. This species at least congregates around watercourses where they can be counted but estimates for birds like Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, which are thinly spread across a vast area, must be treated as highly provisional. With such uncertainty surrounding population estimates, the determination of any population trends is impossible and these are only really possible for those species that pass through a small number of key sites that are monitored, or are picked up during large-scale European surveys. These gaps in our knowledge are one of the main take-home messages from the atlas and they also provide an inspiration to go out and fill them!

Despite such limitations, the distillation of the International Waterbird Census counts has identified 876 key sites in 85 countries, which are listed in the back of the book. These provide a snapshot of our current best knowledge and will be especially useful for policy makers and conservation bodies alike. The editors have done a fantastic job pulling together information from a huge variety of sources and the bibliography stretches over 30 pages and numbers over 1,000 references. The book contains a wealth of information and is produced to a very high standard. It is illustrated throughout with excellent colour photographs and its design makes it very easy to read. It will be essential for anyone working with waders but also deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone with even a passing interest in shorebirds, their ecology, distribution and conservation.

Phil Atkinson

Letters to the Editor



A second record of American Golden Plover in The Gambia

I have belatedly noticed the paper describing the first American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* for Mauritania (Schmaljohann & Thoma, 2005, *Bull. ABC* 12: 158–161), wherein a table of records of the species from West Africa is presented. There is, however, an additional record missing from that list. Just one occurrence was mentioned for The Gambia, in 1984, but there is a second, a bird that I found and photographed at Kotu Sewage Farm, Western Division, on 11 November 1997, which was also seen by a group of birders, among them Clive Barlow and Tony Disley, senior author and artist, respectively, of *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* (Barlow *et al.* 1997; Robertsbridge: Pica Press). Because I assumed that Clive Barlow would publish the details as appropriate, I never submitted the record anywhere, but a photograph of the bird appeared in *Birdwatch* 67: 42–43 (wrongly credited to me, but the published image was taken by Tony Disley).

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Name changes

Nigel Collar's letter (*Bull. ABC* 16: 245) raises more issues than he acknowledges. Whilst there is certainly a case to be made for changing some names for conservation purposes, as he suggests, there are also good reasons *not* to change established English names of birds.

In the present flush of taxonomic changes due to DNA phylogenetic research, scientific names are subject to considerable flux. Genera and species are split or (more rarely) combined, and what had been a fairly stable situation for most groups over many decades is in upheaval. On top of this comes the attempt at a standardised list of English names promoted by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC), enshrined in Gill & Wright (2006)—this despite much apathy or silent opposition from many ornithologists who declined to be part of the initiative.The net result of these two independent but simultaneous processes is that there is unprecedented flux in both English *and* scientific names of birds, tending to cause confusion (and irritation) amongst ordinary birders.

Given that the 'true' name of any taxon is the scientific name, which is subject to both taxonomic fashion and phylogenetic research, to maintain a degree of stability some herpetologists have proposed that split genera should be recognised as full genera, but grouped under their previous umbrella, in the same way that subgenera are sometimes characterised, by using brackets. Thus Sooty Gull *Larus* (*Icthyaetus*) *hemprichi* or White-bellied Black Tit *Parus* (*Melaniparus*) *albiventris*. So far, given that *The Birds of Africa* (and thus the ABC checklist) has been fairly conservative, much of this upheaval has escaped the continent and hence this *Bulletin*, but Europe and the Americas are much affected. Where a familiar species has been found to comprise two or more cryptic species one can similarly bracket the old species name, e.g. Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa* (*epops*) *marginata* or the expected African Hoopoe *U.* (*e.*) *africana*.

However, the above is just to provide background to the issue of changing English names. A quick glance at Peter Lack's latest changes in the ABC checklist's preferred names, incorporating the IOC 'international names', many against his own grain as he admits, reveals the scale of mostly arbitrary alterations that have taken place within the ABC area—108 in all. As I noted in reviewing Gill & Wright (*Ibis* 149: 429–431), some of these names are daft. Calling *Foudia madagascariensis* 'Red Fody' instead of Madagascar (Red) Fody is pretty absurd when most male fodies (five of the seven extant species) are red, and when, if it is to be changed at all, there is the French / Creole name Cardinal (hence 'Cardinal Fody') in use throughout its range (except on St. Helena). Why change Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* to Fork-tailed Swift—it is neither the only swift in the Pacific area, nor the only swift in the world with a forked tail; replacing one inadequate name with another is no improvement! Others are simply banal: Pintado Petrel has long been an attractive alternative to the traditional mariner's name Cape Pigeon for *Daption capense*, but why lose the charm of both with Cape Petrel? In at least one case Lack has defied the IOC, though it's another banal one—Fairy Tern *Gygis alba* becomes White Tern (a long-standing alternative); the IOC invented Angel Tern *de novo*. Some are still behind the times: *Circus maillardi* Madagascar Marsh Harrier becomes Réunion Harrier, but *maillardi* has for some years been generally split from *C. macrosceles*, so whilst the former is indeed the Réunion Harrier, the latter is inevitably again the Madagascar (Marsh) Harrier. The inappropriate retention of 'Marsh' for these birds is purely based on their relationship to Eurasian Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*—they hunt in forests, not marshes.

The ABC has always accepted alternative names in the checklist, and I hope will long continue to do so. However, they are relegated to an inferior status in relation to the 'preferred name', even if, as Lack refreshingly states, he is 'well aware that English names in particular are major causes of argument and potentially confusion. Whatever names are chosen will not be liked by everyone'.

My suggestion is to retain an international name, but demote it to a junior partner of local usage. Hence the bird called Rose-ringed Parakeet by the IOC (*Psittacula krameri*) would be cited (pending revision in progress . . .) as Long-tailed Parakeet (Rose-ringed Parakeet) in a paper on West Africa, Ring-necked Parakeet (Rose-ringed Parakeet) in a paper on Mauritius, but simply Rose-ringed Parakeet in South Africa. Thus even if the international name changed (e.g. in the next edition of the IOC list), the local name would not, and continuity would be maintained.

In the case of Collar's *Heteromirafra sidamoensis*, itself a segregate from the former Long-clawed Lark *H. ruddi* (the nominate always Rudd's Lark in South Africa), there is no long tradition of an English name, since the taxon was only described in 1975. Érard made a very reasonable attempt to localise the bird with the scientific name, and it is hardly his fault that all the traditional provinces in Ethiopia (including Sidamo) were abolished in 1996. However, that leads onto another important issue—whether English bird names should slavishly follow changes in local political nomenclature. I was rather struck when reviewing Gill & Wright that a regrettably ignored Indian contribution to English bird nomenclature submitted to the IOC (Manakadan & Pittie 2002) had retained names using 'Ceylon', whereas the 'politically correct' IOC changed them to 'Sri Lanka'. The IOC was in fact very inconsistent in this process: even 'Abyssinia' survived in at least one name, and Bioko failed to displace Fernando Po in several. In this respect, retaining or adopting a discoverer's name, in this case Erard's Lark (as used by Ash & Atkins 2009), is a safeguard against geographical name changes. The same applies to *Lybius chaplini* also discussed by Collar, who persuaded BirdLife International to change its name from Chaplin's Barbet to Zambian Barbet: Chaplin remains himself—Zambia was Northern Rhodesia earlier in the 20th century, and prior to that was simply a disparate large area with no unified name.

Although there is no real reason why English geographical names should change when local usage does (we don't call Egypt 'el Misr' or India 'Bharat'), there is nonetheless a general tendency to do so, in Africa more than anywhere else. It is very sobering to look at an 1898 map of Africa and hardly recognise any place names or state boundaries—half of today's countries lack names on the map altogether! Politically driven name changes are understandable in relation to colonial names with unfortunate connotations (e.g. Rhodesia), less so where it is possible to separate the political entity from the geographical place; e.g. the Republic of Burkina Faso occupies the geographical area formerly known in Europe as Upper Volta, Malaŵi the shores of Lake Nyasa. Some name changes are simply revised ways of spelling: Botswana/Bechuana[land], Lesotho/Basuto[land].

In short, we should be very wary of name changes, especially when advanced for sectional interests, and remember that conservation is by no means the only issue to be taken into account when tampering with established nomenclature. Even the conservation issue is not clear cut—the successful rescue of *Psittacula eques* and *Nesoenas mayeri* has been under the banners of Echo Parakeet and Pink Pigeon—no mention of Mauritius, though the IOC stubbornly prefers 'Mauritius Parakeet'.

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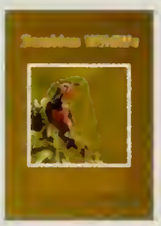

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Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French: French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on CD or floppy disk, please state computer (e.g. IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (e.g. Word, WordPerfect) used.

When sending your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (i.e. with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (e.g. 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of The Times Atlas of the World).

Preferred names

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in The Birds of Africa Vols. 1–7. The African Bird Club has recently published (www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on Birds of Africa but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and alternatives used hy publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-Birds of Africa species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in The Bulletin of the African Bird Cluh and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can he obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.

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The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mali, Maurirania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Senegal, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Cluhs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Cluhs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their consrtution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Cluh does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interesred in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Cluh. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.

Humblot's Heron / Héron de Humblot *Ardea humbloti* by Martin Searle, www.mtsphotography.com